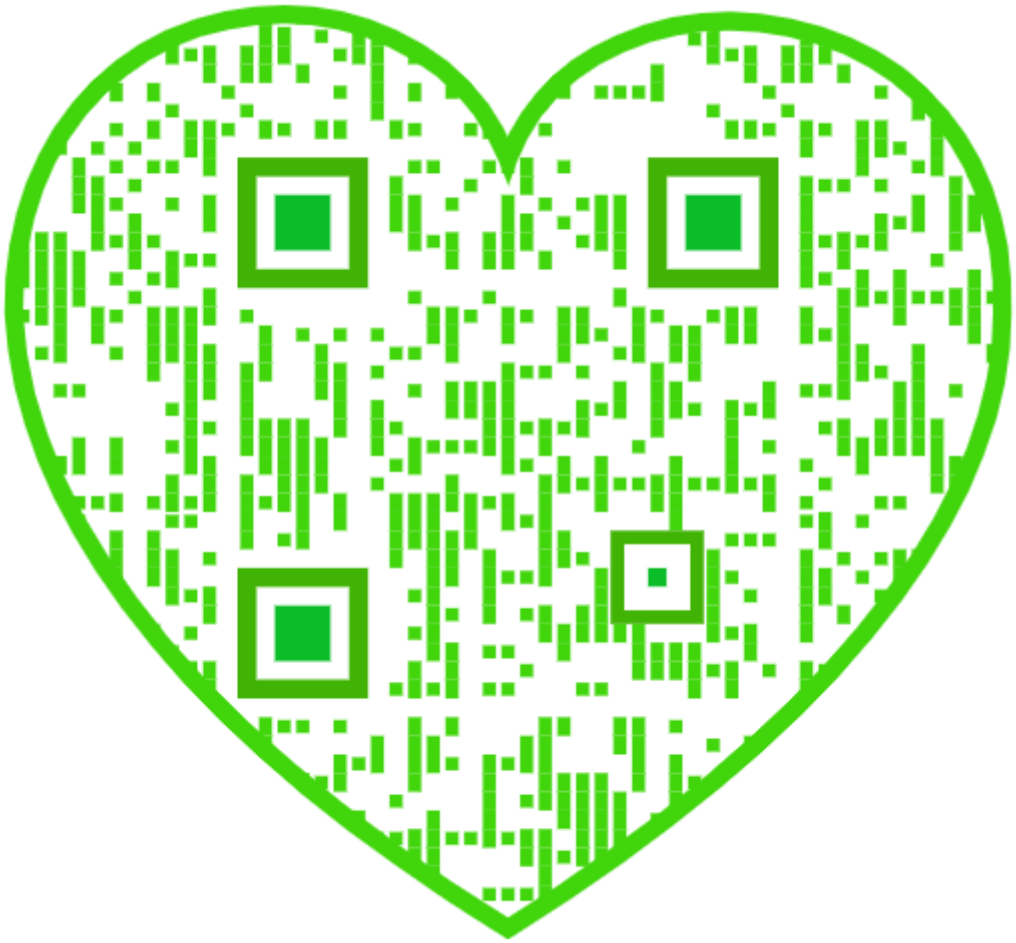

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A Trapped Coyote.
(From a photograph.)

TWENTY YEARS

ON THE

TRAP LINE.

Being a Collection of Revised Camp Notes Written at Intervals During a Twenty Years Experience in Trapping, Wolfing and Hunting, on the Great Northwestern Plains.

BY

Joseph Henry Taylor,

AUTHOR OF "FRONTIER AND INDIAN LIFE," ETC.

BISMARCK, N. D. and AVONDALE, PA.

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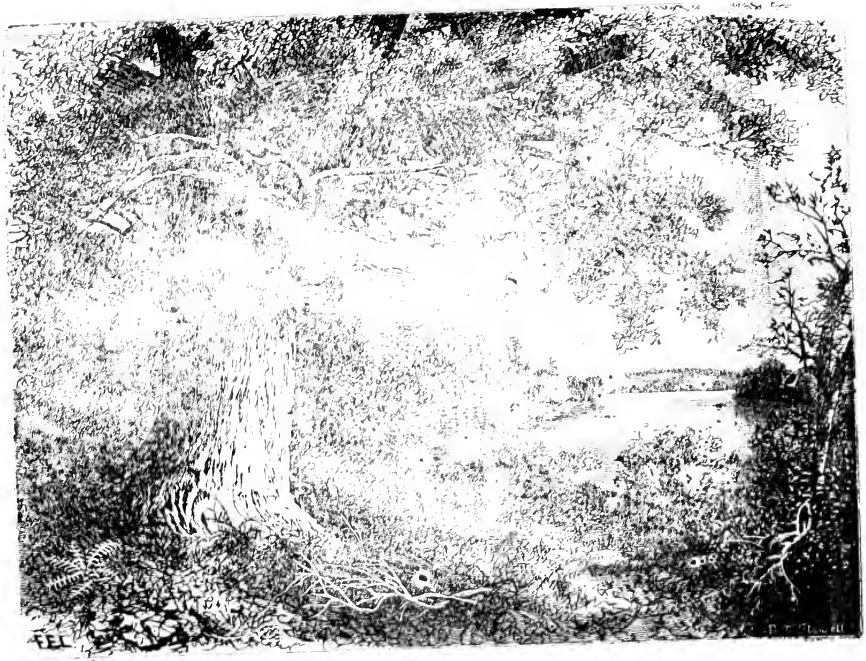
Joseph Henry Taylor.

PREFACE.

AFTER the publication of my recent work, "Frontier and Indian Life," a young but observing class of readers and inquirers, felt a little disappointed, that I did not go more into details about the habits of fur bearing animals, and the methods employed in entrapping them. This with a knowledge that for a long number of years I had followed the vocations of trapper and wolfer in a professional way, and must necessarily be familiar with the subjects to be treated.

In sending forth this little book after its companion one, I have, therefore, endeavored to supply the omission, by giving some account of a hunter's, trapper's and wolfer's life, as I observed and experienced it; written somewhat in a crude form of a rambling narrative covering a record of the doings of many of those years; interspersed with some notings of the principal fur bearing animals of the country, and the methods used in ensnaring and destroying them; also, some further accounts of the doings and undoings of my Indian neighbours.



LAKE OF THE PAINTED WOODS.

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CHAPTER I.

Spirit Lake and the Little Sioux River—Inkpaduta the Outlaw Chief.

IN northwestern Iowa, near what was once known as the Dog Plains, lies the largest inland body of water in that State. It still bears its original Indian name of Spirit Lake, or as sometimes interpreted, "the lake where spirits dwell." It is beautifully located near the southern part of this almost imperceptible plateau, and although somewhat singular in shape, the primitive groves of cottonwood and oak that once lined the background of its pebbly beach, made it a view of such romantic and striking picturesqueness as to early make famous this watery domicile of the ghosts.

This Lake was the early home of the Mdewakontons one of the four groups of the Santees, the supposed parent stock of the

Sioux or Dakota nation of Indians. But incessant wars with the Omahas of the west Missouri River country and the Iowas of the lower Des Moines River, with their confederates, made the tenor of life so insecure to the Mdewakontons that they gave up that section as permanent residence, and made camp with their brothers along the rivers of what is now western Minnesota.

From the southern shore of the Spirit Lake pours out a small stream that forms the Enah wakpa or Stone River of the Sioux, the Petite Riviere des Sioux or Little Sioux River of the early French traders, by which latter appellation it is now known. But a few yards in width as it comes from the Lake, it gathers volume as it meanders along for one hundred and twenty miles in a south western course where it mingles its waters with those of the wide Missouri.

This river like its fountain head was once studded with groves of tall cottonwood along the bends of the lowlands, while on the great curved lines of the uplands with a northern exposure, groves of hardwood forests stood facing the outward plain. They had defied the withering and scorching blasts of the annual

fires from the prairies and stubbornly held their own against evey element of destruction, even in a count by centuries.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Santees had ceased to permanently occupy the land around the Lake they still claimed the right of possession, and their right was so respected by the General Government, that in a treaty with them August 5th, 1851, recognized the claims of the Mdewakontons and Wapekuta bands and promised to pay them for their relinquishment of the Lake and the Little Sioux Valley as well.

Some time previous to this treaty, in a local feud among the Wapekuta Santees, the chief, Tosagi, was slain by some discontents of his tribe. The leader of the chief's murderers, Inkpaduta or the Red Point, a man of some prominence, whose friends and relatives gathered about him to share his punishment, that of banishment and outlawry.

Inkpaduta and his little band betook themselves fearlessly to the Little Sioux Valley, and occupied a section of country that the whole Sioux nation had heretofore regarded, at best, a perilous frontier. But with his handful of eleven warriors and their re-

spective families they moved southward making their first hunting camp on the stream now called Mill creek, nearly opposite the present city of Cherokee.

Inkpaduta was at this time represented as an Indian somewhat deceptive in appearance. He was about forty years of age, of medium height, rather spare in build, his voice soft and undertoned; his eyes weak, and near sighted; his face badly pitted with small pox and his whole make-up had the showing of an humble, ill-used mendicant, and gave little promise of the man whose influence and action in the near future should involve such widespread ruin on both friend and foe.

He had counseled against transfering their lands to the whites and refused to be bound by the treaties made for this purpose. He had doggedly determined to re-occupy the Little Sioux Valley and hold it. With true diplomatic skill he made a truce with the Omahas, and as an honored guest became an occasional partaker at their savory feasts. Indeed, such a favorable impression did the outlawed and beggarly looking chieftain make on the susceptible hearts of his whilom in-

tertainers that himself and band were enjoined to make winter camp at the mouth of Maple river a neighboring stream, one of the lower branches of the Little Sioux, and within an easy days ride of the village of the Omahas.

During the years 1855-6, and the summer of '57, some of the finest sections of land in the Little Sioux Valley were located upon by settlers from Ohio, Illinois and other States east.

The settlement of Smithland along the lower part of this valley, was started one of the earlier of these years. It was, as the name implies, founded by of one the branches of the numerous family bearing that name. The settlement was located principally on the west side of Little Sioux river and but a few miles north of Inkpaduta's camp on the river Maple.

A distrustful feeling, almost from first contact, grew up between the settlers and the Indians, culminating some time late in November 1857, in one of the settlers charging some of the Indians with stealing about one bushel of corn from his crib.

The accusation was stoutly denied by the

Indians who claimed a want of motive, inasmuch as their generous friends the Omahas had liberly supplied them with that cereal.

Some evidence was afterwards adduced to show that the charge was really a trumped one, and that the actual cause a jealousy on the part of some of the settlers against the red men about the game along the streams in the neighborhood, as these red outlaws owing to their great proficiency in the art had often been dubbed the "Trapping Indians."

Therefore, early in December, a posse of the Smithland people after some preliminary organization marched in a body to Inkpaduta's camp and after making a surround and closing in on the wondering and surprised Indians proceeded at once to disarm them, and with violent gestulations, ordered them in the emphatic dialect of the bordermen to "ju k-a-chee."

The outlawed chief made an earnest protest against such action of his white neighbors, and in a dispationate tone called their attention to his people's hapless fate in being deprived of their guns, which were almost the only means of obtaining food for three thousand hungry families.

He also prophesied a cold winter coming upon them, as unthawed snow was laying deep upon the ground. As far as the weather was concerned the chiefs predictions came to pass. The winter that followed is yet referred to by old Iowans as the "hard winter."

Inkpaduta's remonstrance had been in vain. With almost noiseless celerity the little band struck lodges and were off. Had the white trappers of the Smithland party understood "signing up" the dying embers of an Indians camp fire as familiarly as they did a beaver slide, they might have at least made some attempt to stay the storm caused by their over-officiousness.

The "sign" left by the departing Indian were a few small upright sticks placed near the embers where the chief's lodge stood. It would read to a party of four absent hunters, on their return, to avoid all parties of white men, take care of their guns and join them as soon as possible further up the valley of the Little Sioux.

The Indians joined forces near the Correctionville settlement, some thirty miles north of the mouth of Maple river, where they commenced a series of depredations

against the settlers stock and appropriating their fire arms when an opportunity occurred. But after Cherokee,—a settlement thirty miles north of Correctionville—was passed, the killing of the whites commenced and ended in the total destruction of the vigorous young town of Spirit Lake and the exposed settlement at Pelican lakes, killing over sixty persons, men, women and children, carrying away with them as captives two of the most comely of the young women, who were afterwards rescued by Government troops sent out to punish the murderous band.

Massacre at Spirit Lake by Inkpaduta's Band.

CHAPTER II.

Santee Sioux Outbreak of 1862—Valley of the Little Sioux in 1863—An "Official" Wild Turkey Hunt.

ON Monday morning, August 18th, 1862, commenced what proved to be the most wholesale killing of white settlers by Indians since the first settlement of our country. It had been generally termed the Minnesota massacre being principally confined to that State. It was brought on by disaffected members of the lower or Mdewakonton branch of the Santee Sioux.

According to the story of the surviving Mdewakontons, the act was precipitated by four disappointed, hungry hunters, two of them being a part of the survivors of Inkpaduta's "Trapping Indians."

This hunting party of four returned by the way of a settlement, and nearing a farmhouse, stumbled on a nest of hen eggs. Two

of the party were in for taking and eating them, and two opposed. The result was a quarrel and smashing the eggs. They then proceeded to the house and asked for a loaf of bread. This was given to them by the housewife, but violently jerked from their hands by the husband, who had followed from a field when he saw the Indians approach the place. This exasperated them and he was instantly shot dead. The wife also was murdered. Four other settlers were killed near by, and the intoxicated Indians returned to their agency at Rice Creek and reported to their chief, Little Six, what they had done. After much deliberation it was resolved that the die was cast, and early the next morning—being the 18th of August, the awful slaughter and holocaust began.

From the beginning of the outbreak, some of Inkpaduta's band appeared along the Little Sioux Valley, and the destruction of the settlements at Jackson's and Lake Shetek, near the upper end of that valley, and the murders and outrages along the valley itself was clearly the work of these desperate marauders.

Early in 1863, a batallion of bordermen was raised by Col. Jim Sawyer for the protec-

tion of the settlers and their homes in that part of the country. A chain of fortified bastions were erected and garrisoned between Sioux City on the Missouri, and Mankato near the junction of Blue Earth and Minnesota Rivers.

The writer of these pages made a six months enlistment as soldier in the Batallion in the month of September of that year. We were stationed at Fort White, located in the midst of the Correctionville settlement. The fort had been christened in honor of our company commander, and was built in the triangle shape with two over topping bastions at the north and south ends.

Wild game were found in abundance, and as the soldiers were kept constantly on scouting duty, great sport was afforded, and the mess room well supplied with fresh wild meats.

Now and then a spice of danger would come to a scouting party, by the seemingly ever-present painted and feathered form, on some distant knoll, of one or more of Inkpaduta's Santees. An undying spirit of unsatisfied vengence seemed to inspire them to try and remain around the scenes of their early

trials and triumphs as long as the spirit of bravado ruled in their unconquered and merciless breasts.

The principal part of the garrison at Fort White had been, before their enlistment as soldiers, old hunters and trappers, and when off post duty usually followed their old vocation along the neighboring streams, as pastime. Beaver, otter, mink and muskrat were found within a short distance from the post grounds. Being an inquisitive "tenderfoot," I usually sought the trappers' company on these excursions to their baits and traps, and being a novice in the art had an impatient yearning for the high honors of an expert.

Captain White was a popular officer with both soldiers and citizens. While a good disciplinarian when the exigencies of the service required it, he also found time for relaxation, making garrison life less prosy than is usually found at frontier posts.

Sometime in November, a dressy young military coxcomb came from Iowa's capital on a mission of some sort to the various posts garrisoned by the batallion.

He wore the shoulder straps and uniform of

LITTLE CROW.

Leader of the Santee Sioux during the Indian outbreak in Minnesota, in 1862. Killed by a trapper August 1863.

a lieutenant and was aide-de-camp to the Governor, or some military dignitary at Des Moines. He was guest of the company commander while at our fort, and in a confidential manner unfolded to the good natured senior a burning desire to take back some bewildering souvenir of his skill among the wild beasts and birds. For this purpose he had brought all the way by stage coach from the capital, a blooded dog and a high priced gun. The captain suggested as Thanksgiving was near at hand he try his skill on wild turkeys, and pointing his index finger toward a grove, remarked that the "woods was full of them."

The young officer waited for nothing more, but girding his hunting rig about him, gathering up his gun and whistling to his dog, rushed off in the direction indicated.

In less than an hour the gay hunter returned in drenching perspiration, with four huge turkeys, and when nearing the captain, extending them at arm's length exclaimed exultingly, "this is official."

Early the next morning, with the agility of a man of business, the aide-de-camp boxed up his big birds, and was off for the capital, but not without evoking the good natured cap-

tain for favors extended, and inviting him to a wild turkey feast at Des Moines on Thanksgiving Day.

Our commandant accepted the invitation, and found a gay company before a fine spread, with the young officer enthroned as master of ceremonies. He was recounting to a seemingly delighted, lestwise an appreciatively attentive audience, the worth of his valuable dog, and the accuracy of his "laminated steel barrels." Indeed, what more proof than the well browned gobblers in the smoking pans before them.

After the dinner was over, toasts were in order and one after another recited their piece, until it came to the frontier captain's turn who was expected to respond to the toast "Wild Turkeys." He excused his inability to do justice to the occasion, as he was no talker at all, and proceeded to read from a small scrap of paper. It was a receipt for payment by the captain, for four turkeys, the property of a widow near his post, who had been dispoiled of her flock on the day the aforementioned young officer made his big hunt on her premises. The rage and discomfiture of the host was great and the joking cap-

train was glad to put distance between Iowa's capital and harm to himself.

In December an order came for the disbanding of the Batallion to enable such as desired to enter the regularly organized regiments. Corporal Ordway led a posse into the Fourth Iowa cavalry, but the main body was discharged.

The orderly sergeant of the company, and the writer were made a special detail, and detained in the service some weeks longer when we, too, were mustered out.

Having now served as a soldier with but little intermission since the day after Fort Sumpter fell, April 14, 1861, I now resolved to follow in the wake of the dreams of my early boyhood—hunt for the homes and haunts of free wild Indians along the streams of the wide treeless and semi-desert plains, or among the gorges and canons of the eternal snow-capped mountains of the great Rocky chain.

CHAPTER III.

An Autumn Trap on Mill Creek 1865—Trapper's Outfit—The Start—Meet a Winnebago Chief—A Scare—Mink Leading Fur of the Season.

AFTER nearly a year of wandering along the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains I returned to the seclusion of the quiet little village of Correctionville in the Little Sioux Valley. It was in the month of September, 1865, and as that month included the letter "r" the trapper's symbol for the opening of the fur season, a stir was observed among the men of that calling in a preparatory rush for choice game preserves.

"Lime" Comstock one of the most expert of these trappers was now making ready. I accepted an offer from Mr. Comstock to accompany him as partner on a fall trap to the headwaters of Mill Creek, some sixty miles north of the village. Our first purchase

were a team of well broke ponies, harness and wagon, also an extra riding pony to attend the trap line. We then purchased a regular western camp equipment, consisting of tent, cooking utensils for camp fire and about forty traps of the Oneida Community manufacture. About one half of the traps were number one's or single spring. They were fastened with light chains, but sufficient to hold mink, muskrat and skunk, for which they were intended. The balance of the kit were numbered two, three and four. The number two's were used to catch otter, foxes and wolves. The other numbers were used after the beaver. The three last numbers were double springs. The springs of all were made of good springy steel with bolts and chains of durable iron.

We finally made a move one bright morning about the middle of the month, and when fairly out of sight of our late rendezvous, my partner forgot his ammunition sack, but would not return for it, avering that it would bring bad luck on him to do so. I took the responsibility to return for him, and when nearing the house, the sight I had of a pale young female face through the window, gave a re-

minder that there were other than the superstitious trapper who believed in the direful results of the unlucky omen.

At a small creek about eight miles from our starting point we unhitched our team and became dinner guests of Ed Haws, locally nicknamed "Smutty Bear," from some fancied facial resemblance to the noted Yankton chief. Haws was a wide-a-wake borderman and at one time over on the West Fork of the Little Sioux River, headed a successful fight against Inkpadutas's band, led by the chief's son. They were evenly numbered—fifteen on a side; all mounted. Three Indians fell.

The road after leaving "Smutty Bear's" ranch, followed along the curved river, now and then passing through cottonwood and oak groves, with their beautiful varigated autumn-tinted leaves, throwing an apparent halo on every thing around them.

On entering one of these orchard looking openings, our ponies gave a sudden snort. A commanding appearing Indian, with a melancholly cast of countenance, stood by the roadside. We had met before and I knew him. It was Little Preast the broken hearted chief of the Winnebagoes. He was wandering

along the river with his family, camping among the groves. To all appearances, he had just walked down from a neighboring butte where he could survey the surrounding landscape. From that pinnacle, out to the far-away blue, he could see the shadowy outlines of his former home on the Blue Earth River. From the five fingers of an extended hand, he counted the number of removels himself and tribe had passed from one reservation to another, in the vain hope of out-running and hiding from the cupidity of his pale faced brother. Though giving up his possessions as demanded, in their rotation, with a vague hope in the equity of divine justice—that earthly possessions ends with the earthly life—"that time rights all things."

About six miles further along the river trail, we observed a smoke curling up from a heavy patch of willows. Comstock left me with the team, and took his gun to reconnoiter. In about half an hour he returned. He said the smoke was from the camp fire of the noted Trapper Hawthorne and partner. He further said the trappers had "strung out a line" and would put in the fall months at that place. They had just returned from "signing

up" Mill Creek, but were better pleased with their prospects at the place where we found them.

In communicating these things to me, Comstock left out a very important item—a big scare. Just the evening before, they had reached this camp after a hard drive of thirty miles, twenty miles of which they were followed, on the run, helter skelter—up hill and down, by six dismounted Indians—Inkpaduta's hostile Santees. This too from the very place we were now going,—the headwaters of Mill Creek. But all this I learned long afterward.

As we resumed our journey, I could not but notice the extreme watchfulness that my partner manifested at objects ahead of us, as we moved along the divide on the high praries,' and partly guessed he had not told all the news he had learned from the two trappers.

We reached the first grove up Mill Creek about sundown, and immediately went into camp for the night. After caring for our ponies, each of us took a separate hunting bout. Comstock returned at dusk with a nice fat buck, while my evening trophy consisted of a forlorn looking old gobbler.

Early the next morning we hitched up and started out to find the Second Forks, where we expected to halt and "sign up" the vicinity. Just above the Forks, to the right, stood an open grove of oak timber. As this article became more scarce as we ascended the creek we concluded to encamp there. Comstock took his gun and a few traps, while I attended to the duties of the camp.

While looking around, I observed by the bending of the grass the marks of a wagon; and that the horses feet led down stream after making a semicircle turn. I also noticed while watering the ponies at a beaver dam, several moccasin tracks in the soft mud and all leading one way, viz:, in the direction the wagon had evidently taken.

When Comstock returned, I informed him of my discovery. He thought it might have been Hawthorne, but when reminded that trappers seldom use moccasins in signing up a creek, he then suggested as an possibility that it might have been elk hunters from the fort at Cherokee. But Trapper Hawthorne afterwards informed me, it was at this very place they were jumped by that roving band of hostile Santees.

That evening, after assisting to put out a few traps, my partner surprised me by saying that as the weather was now favorable, and traveling good, he thought he had better return to Correctionville for more supplies; as he thought we might need them. So bright and early the next morning, partner and team were rattling over the prairie divide toward the Little Sioux Valley. He did not return for two months after, and then left behind him the much needed "grub box."

Nothing was left for me to do now but buckle down to a professional trapper's life. Not knowing what fur was "on the lead," I set out a "diversified line." But the net result seemed to be a specialty in wild ducks. Almost every morning I found a dozen or more of these fowls dead in the traps. The beaver dams were literally covered with them having come in from their breeding places to "gather" before commencing their southward flight.

After three weeks of solitary life, the monotony was broken one day by the appearance of two horsemen. It was the corporal commanding the fort at Cherokee, and a trapper guide. The brusque young commander soon

announced his business. Garrison life was somewhat irksome, and by way of diversion from its onerous duties, and some hope in the profits likely to accrue therefrom, he had concluded to buy furs.

He assured me further, that the latest reports from the London fur sales placed mink on the lead, and with no wish to take advantage of my possible ignorance of the market, as a starter he would give, for good prime skins, ten dollars each, for all I had ready; and the latest New York fur quotations on all other prime hides and furs in my possession.

With such a generous offer, it is needless to add that the aspiring fur merchant returned down the valley with my late stock of peltries.

CHAPTER IV.

More About the Autumn Trap on Mill Creek—Mink Trapping—Minister of the Gospel in Bad Business—A Fur Dealer's "Round Up."

THE fur buyer and his companion had hardly disappeared from view before I set vigorously to work re-organizing the trap line. The otter and beaver slides were at once abandoned and every available trap put along mink runaways or set at the "baits." Ten dollars for a prime mink hide. And now that the first snow in October had fallen, all furs were reckoned prime until the month of May, and beaver in this northern region held good until June.

A trapper's first lesson to learn before making much of a success at his calling, is to thoroughly understand the habits of the game he is trying to catch.

A light fall of snow, followed by a calm

night is his most opportune time to "sign up." The tracks are then fresh and easy defined. Mink travel with a loping motion, making regular well measured jumps of from twelve to fifteen inches apart. Both fore feet as well as both hind ones, while traveling, are kept close together, the left of each foot usually, slightly in advance.

The habits of the mink vary but little in any part of North America, though in the extremes, north and south, there is some distinction. The fur of the deep water northern mink, is almost jet black, while the southern ones are mostly of a reddish brown; the more northern, the finer the texture and thicker the fur. For this reason all grades of northern furs lead in price in the main fur markets of the world.

In seeking its food the mink often immitates the weasel in its throat-cutting destructiveness when it finds itself among a lot of unprotected or helpless brood of young fowls or birds. But when hungry it will return to the place of its last feast, and if nothing more inviting presents themselves will feed upon the cold carcasses of the former feast. And if this proves scant, after eating will hide

the remainder, and when a trapper is lucky enough to find this cache,—a sure catch then offers itself to his vision, for the mink, if nothing happens it in the meantime, will again return. Young muskrats, fish and fresh water clams, are also a very palatable food for mink.

As mink fur does not become prime even in northern latitudes, before the middle of October the mink trapper in making water sets, should guard against a "freeze down" by putting his traps along the runways in the swift running water or in a never freezing spring. In water sets for mink, the trap should not be set in the water over two or three inches deep.

In winter, a good call is to a flesh bait, with a land or water set. If on land, the bait should be covered on every side except where the trap is set. This side should be exposed, and the trap set within four inches of the bait. The trap should be covered over thinly with feathers, or dry tree leaves well pulverized. Snow coverings can only be made with any hope of success in extreme freezing weather.

In the spring, a combination of fall and

winter methods are best. When a mink is caught in a water runway at this season, the scent of the trapped mink draws others; and the trap should not be changed as long as "fresh sign" is found in the neighbourhood

When not busy with the traps or stretching and preserving the skins and furs, I found time to erect and fix up a comfortable cabin for fall quarters; with some little idea of defense, in case of being correlled by some stray war party.

After Comstock's departure, my company consisted of two young fox hounds and the camp pony. A distemper shortly after killed the dogs, leaving me alone with the faithful little nag. I often clambered a neighbouring butte, saying with the redoubtable Robinson Chesnut :—

"I am lord of all I survey
My rights there are none to dispute, &c."

During one of the Indian summer days of early November, I made a journey up one of the creek's branches hunting after some elk. On looking back towards the camp, I saw great black clouds of smoke encircling the cabin on every side. The prairie was on fire and I hastened back to save my scant posses-

sions. The pony was tied to a picket rope and would be almost helpless. But on arriving there found him gone, and without looking further proceeded at once to save the cabin by extinguishing the flames on the inside circle. After this was done, I took up gun, ammunition and a lunch of johnny cake and venison and started to hunt up the pony.

I soon came on a fresh wagon trail and concluded to follow it. Noting that the hoofs of a led pony looked familiar, and guessing that the occupants were the starters of the fire, I redoubled my exertions to come up within reach of them.

A full moon shed its silver light along the trail which enabled me to follow it for a distance of twenty miles or more when the settlement at Peterson was reached. I here learned that the parties I was hunting had passed through without stopping and were heading for Buena Vista some twenty miles further on.

I reached Buena Vista about sunrise, it being a distance of something over forty miles from the place of starting. At this place I learned that my game was a minister of the gospel and his two sons. They had been out

elk hunting and had thought the pony Indian property, and therefore legitimate spoil.

In attempting to give the preacher an exhibition of bad temper, when—

"An answer to his whistle shrill,
Was echoed back from every hill;"

and I was glad to return to the camp on Mill Creek without other indemnification than the recovery of my pony and lariat

Late in December, Comstock returned and a regular winter blizzerd set in, and we concluded to pull up the traps and reach the Little Sioux Valley in time to save our stock from perishing in the storm.

In crossing an eight mile divide for this purpose, we had to face a bitter north wind; and when within a few hundred yards of the valley where the traps were strung, I succumbed and fell, as in a blissful sleep, on the snow-covered ground.

My partner, meantime, marking my absence, retraced his steps discovering me prostrate, gave me such an unmerciful thumping that I awoke maddened and followed him toward a bunch of dry grass which he immediately ignited; and coming to my senses, all went well. That experience convinced me,

that death by freezing after a certain period of uncomfortable cold is passed, is absolutely painless.

The balance of the winter we divided into watches,—with Hawthorn's abandoned cabin as his quarters, and turkey and deer hunting around Plato's ranch on Little Wolf Creek.

While at Plato's, we learned some news from our military fur buying friend at Cherokee. He invested heavily in furs, relying upon steady markets and good profits on the final outcome. Besides this, Christmas was the time set for him to wed one of the only two marriageable daughters, at the time in the village of fair Cherokee.

Just before the holidays, adverse reports from the markets of London reached him, and he hastily gathered his furs in a pile, returned a short furlough, and proceeded forthwith to Saint Paul, to unload before the crash came. But he was too late. He returned to his post a busted furrier. And again the old saw was verified, that "bad luck like crows never comes singly." During the absence of the corporal commanding, his expected bride, in an hour of fickleness or change of heart—after a lightning courtship,—married another, and that other a plain "buck" soldier of his own command.

CHAPTER V.

The Final Trap on Mill Creek—A Spring "Set-out"—Trapper Hawthorne—"Calling" the Beaver—Lost on the Prairie—Inkpaduta's Sons.

GREAT quantities of snow fell throughout northwestern Iowa, during the month of February 1866, followed by fierce wind storms in which some of the more exposed settlers lost their lives. "Trapper Joe" was found dead in his blankets under his wagon on Waterman Creek. His horses were tightly tied to his wagon wheels; one dead but its mate alive. Two trappers on Lake Shetek were badly frozen; one with both legs frozen stiff below the knees and his comrade frozen blind. It took them twelve days to travel thirty-five miles—the nearest settlement from their camp.

As a consequence of the snow, the February thaw in the latter part of the month, set

the ice running in the streams. Again Comstock and myself formed a trapping partnership; and again we headed for Mill Creek; and, he afters hivering around the camp fire for a fewdays blessing the March winds,—as before—deserted me.

He had gone but a few days when Hawthorne and Jackson, two trappers, appeared and asked for mutual camp and a division of the grounds. The proposition I cheerfully acceded to, though by trappers rules my priority gave me fur rights to the territory covered by my traps, providing a charge of dog-in-the-manger style of holding could not be sustained.

Trapper Hawthorne, whom I casually introduced in a previous chapter, was at that time reckoned one of the most successful beaver trappers in northwestern Iowa. He usually sought places that had been—to use a trappers phase—"trapped out." But he managed, as a rule, to take about as much fur from the place, as the "skimmers" or first trappers. He was originally a Marylander, married young, brought his wife west, and were among the first settlers in Little Sioux Valley: in fact one of the earliest of the

Smithlanders, but one who had refused to be a party to the disarming of Inkpaduta's hunting camp, characterizing it as an unjustifiable proceeding, lacking cause.

We made permanent camp at the Three Forks, and the following two months I became a diligent pupil in learning the noted trappers method of catching beaver by the scented bait.

The bait most generally used by beaver trappers consists, simply, of the bark castors of either sex—though used separately. The castors taken from the beavers late in the winter or early spring prefered. It is then placed in a bottle or horn and mixed with common molasses and wild garlic.

The scent bait as Hawthorne prepared and used, contained the following iugredients: The bark castor of a female beaver, taken in April; to this is added two spoonfulls of the oil of cinnamon, and about half as much of the oil of burgamont. To this mixture alcohol is added, when the bait is ready for use. Age adds to the vigor of the bait when properly cared for.

Some trappers delight in a mysterious compound known only to themselves. But the

not result of their "catch" rarely ever attests any unusual power in "drawing" the inquisitive beaver.

In the spring months after the ice has went out and the water along the creek beds settle to its normal condition, if the sign justifies the trapper puts out his beaver "calls" or baits. As Hawtherne's methods were very successful in this line, and not having the air of mystery that usually surround the "medicine catch" of the French Canadian, I will state them: He takes a small willow or cottonwood stick cuts it in two pieces of about six inches in length, and each slivered at one end. This slivered end is then daubed with the concoction, the slivering helping to retain the scent in the wood.

He then searches up, if possible, a place where beaver use, though not on its runways or regular slides. He then sets the trap allowing for the beaver's wide tread, and runs the unscented ends of the sticks in the mud at the water line, allowing the scented ends to hang over the water in the direction of and within eight or ten inches of the water covered traps.

Trappers, sometimes, when unobserved, treat

their too neighbourly rivals bait sticks to a coat of the oil castors, thereby producing a scare instead of a call to the passing beaver.

One March morning when the snow was falling fast, I started up the creek for an elk hunt, knowing that the storm would bring them in the breaks of the creek for shelter. I had not traveled far before I espied a band of about twenty, but having scented me were trotting out to the high prairies. I followed on the trail until drifting snow obliterated their tracks so that I lost the game entirely.

The air had became filled with drifting snow and I became bewildered and lost. I had no compass and was drifting out to the treeless and shelterless basin of the upper Floyd's River. In the direction I was going I could not hope to strike timber short of sixty miles; and as the snow was from one to three feet deep I must become exhausted and perish in a few more hours.

In this dilemma, while trying to take observations from a raise of ground, I saw on my back trail what appeared, through a slight lull in the still flying particles of snow, a grove of timber. I immediatley retraced my steps, but on arriving where the supposed timber was,

found nothing but elk tracks. These I followed at a venture, and after two more hours of snow wading was joyfully surprised to find myself within a mile of our trapping camp. Towards night it turned illustrious and bitter cold, and the camp fire sent up a cheerful glare that bid the death phantom that had followed in the wake of my outward trail.

About the middle of May, Rowthorne and his partner broke camp and started homeward, while I remained a few days longer to trap the beaver dam runways. In doing so I met with the same trouble of the previous autumn, namely, from the immense number of wild ducks. They were there in every variety of plumage—the green headed mallard, the red headed fish duck from the Arctic and the white plumes from the Hudson Bay country.

In my twenty years after experience on the trap line, I never recollected seeing so many varieties of these fowls, and in such numbers at any one time, as during that spring camp on Mill Creek.

As the rapidly changing season commenced to "spot" the furs, I made ready to pull up traps and move down to the settlements. On the morning of my final departure; I noticed

RAIN IN THE FACE.

a man passing along the edge of the bluffs without seeming to see the camp.

With gun in hand and a brace of pistols in my "war" belt, I intercepted him with a "hello." On approaching, I discovered him to be a half breed, and seemed trailing something.

"Did you see nobody pass here?" he said in good English.

"No," I answered.

"You were in luck they didn't see you!"

"Why so!"

"Because Inkpaduta's boys don't often let a chance slip."

"Inkpadutas's boys," I repeated mechanically.

"Yes, Inkpaduta's sons!"

Inkpadutas's sons!

I well remember the cold chill that crept over my nerves at the half breed's mention of the dreaded name. As soon as he had disappeared down the winding valley I critically examined the trail he was following, and found the moccasin tracks of six different Indians, all pointing down the valley.

After having taken up the traps, I moved up on the high divide and took a bee line for Correctionville. A few days later news came

down the valley that the settlement at Peterson had been struck by a small band of Indians and the sergeant commanding the soldiers at that place had been killed. It was the work, of course, of the same little party that had passed my camp, as they were heading directly for Peterson settlement.

Striking the valley of the Little Sioux at least once a year on a hostile raid, seemed to be a fanatical observence of Inkpaduta's band they could not abandon. Whither fishing pickeral around the shores of Lake Winnipeg, or hunting antelope on the plains of the upper James River, or buffalo in the Judith Basin, or along the Muscelshell River, time and opportunity were found to start out hundreds of miles on a dreary foot journey to count a "coup" on their aggressive conquerors.

The Battle on the Little Big Horn is still rated the most important engagement between the Whites and Indians since that day on the banks of the turgid Tippecanoe, when the sycamore forests hid the broken columns of Tecumseh and the Prophet, from Harrison's victorious army.

Various writers have ascribed Custer's

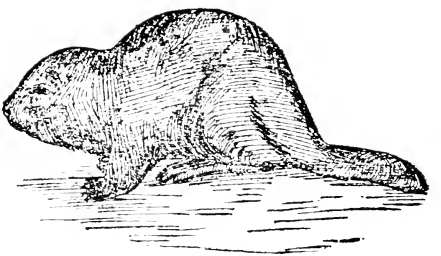
death, as the culminating episode in this latter day fight, and to highten the color of the picture, have laid his death to the personal prowess of Rain-in-the-Face, or on the field alter of the Chief Priest Sitting Bull.

It has long since been proved that Rain-in the-Face was not on the field of battle that day, but miles away in charge of the pony herd. About Sitting Bull's hand in the affair he has expressed himself again and again, by saying in about these words to the charge:

"They tell you I murdered Custer. It is a lie. I am not a war chief. I was not in the battle that day. His eyes were blinded that he could not see. He was a fool and rode to his death. He made the fight not I. Who ever tells you I killed Custer is a liar."

Setting Bull's defence was but justice to himself. He was the hunted, not the hunter. Custer rode down on the Indian village on the Little Big Horn, with a ciphered scroll floating high above his feathery-winged guidons. It has blazoned in many a mortal combat between armies of angry men in the past, and will again appear,—that "he that lives by the sword will die by the sword." And Custer's sword was his life.

Any intelligent Yankton, Santee, Uncpapa Blackfoot or other Sioux who participated in the fight against Custer's batallions on that 25th day of June 1876, will tell you it was difficult to tell just who killed Custer. They believed he was the last to fall in the group where he was found—that the last leaden messengers of swift death hurled amongst this same group of falling and dying soldiers, were belched forth from Winchesters held in the hands of Inkpaduta's sons.



BEAVER.

(From a photograph.)

CHAPTER VI.

About Beavers.

THE common American beaver, the Castor Fiber, of the family Castoridæ as classified by the naturalist, are yet occasionally found along some of the isolated, unsettled streams and rivers of portions of the Rocky Mountain country.

The beaver has usually held their own in the battle for existence through the changing climatic conditions of past centuries. They have held their own against their carnivorous enemies that beset them on all sides, and only since their warm, glossy fur covering has attracted man to join in its destruction, has this intelligent and prolific animal of the order Rodentia been compelled to almost vacate its place from among the living animals of the earth.

With the exceptions of size, shape of the tail and a few other noticable peculiarities, the general appearance of the beaver is that of a huge muskrat—the little rodent so common on almost every rivulet, creek or river on the American Continant.

The weight of a full grown beaver will average about forty-five pounds, though the writer has trapped some that weighed over sixty pounds. Their ears are small and short—so short indeed, that they are hardly noticable among the thick fur. Their eyes are small and black with a dull, listless look. The nose is of the pug order. Their head nearly round, set to a thick neck. A pair of huge incisors, set in the front of massive jaws, serves a variety of purposes—serves them as impliments of labor in felling trees and weapons of defense, preparing food, &c.

The average length of an adult beaver is about two feet with a trowel shaped tail of perhaps ten inches more. The tail is scaled like a fish and is supported from the body by sinews of great strength.

The fore legs—or properly arms—are short: not over four or five inches in length. The hind legs are also short and round. The

hind parts of a beaver, when the fur and tail are taken off, very nearly resemble a fat goose. Their hind feet are webbed and they walk on their heels somewhat like a raccoon.

Their outside fur is a chesnut brown with a tendancy to change to a lead color near the skin. An occasional family of black fur beaver are met with, but they are only sporadic or exceptional cases.

The intelligence and sagacity of beaver is proverbial. While the author of this work does not rate their intellect as high as the fabled tales of Pumet, Olaus Magnus or George Heriot among writers, or the tough yarns told by the average old trappers, yet during a close study of their habits for a long number of years, I am prepared to accept with an ear to facts many of these seemingly improbable stories.

In the construction of their dwellings they adapt themselves to their surroundings. If in a lake they build a conical shaped house out in the water a few feet from shore. The house is usually about five or six fees high with a circumferance at the base of about twenty feet. Deep ditches are dug on all sides and a place dredged several feet near the outside

to sink and store their winter provisions which consists of the tender shoots and branches from the willow, cottonwood, ash and other species of bark used by the beaver as food.

The inside of the house is cosily plastered, and contains one or more rooms—usually two, an eating and sleeping apartment. The beds are built high, and consists of a material made from the inside bark of trees. It is built on an elavation to avoid an unpleasant nap during a sudden raise of water in the lake. But one family, occupy a house, numbering from four to seven members. Sometimes an outsider is admitted to the circle, his welcome brought about by his indefatigable industry in aiding to repair the breakages in dams and replasterlng their house or assisting in dragging in the winter grub pile.

They take their breakfast at sunrise and supper at sundown. Their dinner hour is irregular. They sit in a circle and handle their grub and eat like squirrels. I have often listened to them at their breakfast. They always seemed making a merry feast. The soft voice of tha female, the gruff notes from the head of the family and the shrill piping of

the juniors could be heard in a happy confusion around the board of good cheer. After the meal—or bark—has been served, Mother Beaver in the absence of a table cloth, gathers up the pealed sticks from which the bark had been eaten, and pushes them out in the canal current, when they all retire until the dull twilight calls them forth to prepare for another feast or begin their nocturnal labors.

Along the rivers and streams the "bank beaver" predominates. They are reckoned by some writers on the beaver, as of a different family from those of the house builders of the lakes, and more nearly related to the European variety.

My observations have led me to believe, however, that there is no difference whatever in the stock, but their surroundings only, and the ingenuity of the beaver to adapt themselves to changed circumstances making whatever perceptible difference noticed in their changed habits.

The "grass beaver," have a more distinct change of habit and appearance from the other two. They live along the pond holes beyond the timber lines of the creeks and run-

ning streams. They live alone, or in small families. They burrow in the banks, and live on grass roots or buck brush. Their winter "grub pile" has about the same relation to the winter stores of the lake and dam beaver that the distressed looking winter stores of the "bumble" bee compares with the well filled combs of the little honey bee.

The bank beaver of the running streams show a fine order of animal intellect. That they can successfully dam up wide rushing rivers with a breastwork several feet in height and with such a network of masonry that defies the rush of the wildest torrents of mad waters. While in the construction of their houses they are not so elaborate, or have they the fine finish that adorn the mud mansions of their brothers of the lakes, yet for durability against the fangs of a pack of famishing wolves, or against the grinding and pushing of great masses of ice in the spring break-up, they are equal to the emergency. These houses of the running streams are usually made against the bank, allowing a good substantial finish to the front while the main part of the house is dug out of the solid earth.

In the Upper Missouri country where the ice freezes during the winter, to from three and a half to four feet in thickness, the watchful rodents were kept busy keeping their feed beds from freezing down, by incessant work, and the canal must be kept open, otherwise they would be frozen up in their houses, and perish by starvation and cold.

It is often remarked that "a woman's work is never done." The same can truly be said of the tireless industry of the beaver. Building or replastering houses, repairing and building dams, digging and dredging canals, and keeping their feed beds free from a solid freeze-down were, but a part of their tasks.

With all these trials, added to their inoffensive ways—their gentle disposition,—their patience and forbearance in every form of persecution—their very meekness in the face of a cruel death, should force a pitying tear from the ruling masters of the world, rather than man should lead in every wile, in every trick or subtle craft that ingenuity can invent or force give to encompass the poor beavers utter destruction.

But Fashion's vagaries must be appeased.

Like the stone-faced image that sit enthroned in regal magnificence on the cruel flesh-crushing car of Juggenaut,—painting itself with the blood of the weak, the meek and the innocent, as in pitiless, rigid-faced Sphinx-like serenity, it rides the earth.

CHAPTER VII.

Along the Elkhorn River—Beaver "Up to Trap"—Camping Among the Wild Plums—An Elk Hunt—A Clean Burn Out.

AUGUST 20th, 1866, found an Omaha hardware dealer busy fitting out three inthusiastic young men for an autumn hunt and trap along the headwaters of the famous Elkhorn River. Ballard rifles, pistols, plenty of ammunition, and a large kit of traps were purchased with a reckless disregard for the wealth in hand. Game was reported plenty and prices in raw furs good, so that no uncomfortable visions distressed the minds of the trio.

The new formed hunting and trapping firm consisted of "Buffalo Ned," otherwise Mr. E. Minick, from the Peori bottoms of the Sucker State; Mr Jennings, or "The Gopher" hailing from the State that bore his non de plume,

and the chronicler, who had reached a round in his professional ladder, was dubbed the "Trapper." These names had been applied as frontier custom, by the jovial lumbermen that made the welkin ring around the forests of breezy Rockport.

A contract with a teamster making his obligation to deliver our luggage at some point on the North Fork of the Elkhorn River, was duly observed, and after an uneventful trip, following the course of Logan Creek, thence along the main river until the North Fork was reached, when after following along the stream for a number of miles, some beaver sign was observed and we concluded to go into camp and try our luck with the traps in the vicinity.

After pitching our tent and making some sort of order for the camp, the bright new traps were brought from the boxes and three enthusiastic fur catchers started out to sign up and put out a line for beaver.

The early season made sign hunting difficult. But little work was being done on the dams the beaver wisely waiting for the passing of the summer freshets. But sufficient sign was found to set out a three mile line.

The traps were mostly set on the regular runways leading over the breasts of the dams, or where the slide of the wood workers led out to recently cut trees.

At dawn next morning Buffalo and the Gopher started out to attend the traps, while I remained in camp. In a few hours they returned in bad humor. They had a muskrat or two and said somebody had stolen half of the traps and "monkeyed with the balance."

After the breakfast was over I returned with my partners on a visit to the trap line. A little observation and I was soon convinced where the trouble lay. It was simply a case of beaver "up to trap." We were now located on the trapping grounds of the Omaha Indians, who were rated experts in that art.

The few beaver that had survived through this constant waylaying, came out often with the loss of one or both fore feet, and a full knowledge of what a steel trap was, and became wary and suspicious in their evening peregrinations.

In this instance Castor Fiber had made a demoralized looking trap line. The new traps shining like silver through the water, so that even the dull eyed beaver could descern them

without much effort. Some of the traps were found sprung, with pealed sticks in the jaws of them. Some were found bottom side up but unsprung, while the "stolen" ones were found nicely plastered against the breasts of the dams to do duty as material in making needed repairs.

These observations led us to take up the line and bring the traps to camp as it was useless to contend against old beaver with bright traps, and an exposure to the air and and a rust varnish became necessary.

In the meantime while rambling around, we discovered a temporary balm from disappointment at the shrewdness of Castor Fiber. It was finding an immense orchard of the wild plum. The fruit was ripe, and the trees thickly interspersed with red and green,—the red fruit and green leaves, and some were of the yellow color.

These wild plum groves are found along every considerable stream in the country of the Great Plains, and the fruit is highly prized by the housewives of the border, for jelly and preserves. The plums are of many excellent flavors, and range from the hickory nut to the walnut in size.

To eat plums and more thoroughly enjoy the prospect, we moved our camp to the grove. In this move we disturbed several wolves and coyotes, who had themselves been camping around and eating the ripe fruit as a needed change from almost constant meat diet. They would sit around in the daytime on distant hills in silent watching, but when night came manifested their displeasure at our presence by mournful howling.

After spending about a week in the plum camp; we were surprised one morning by a new set of visitors—a band of elk. They were nine in number, and taking their time feeding leasurly along the creek.

The band had passed camp unnoticed, but as soon as we discovered them, Buffalo and I armed ourselves and gave chase. They walked faster as they passed out on the open prairie, and it became difficult to come up with them. Their trail led south of the forks of the main river, where their speed were still further accelerated by the sound of axes among the timber. It was from a party of Illinoisans—the founders of the after flourishing town of Norfolk.

As the elk were "snuffing the wind" it was

not difficult in keeping a little behind them unobserved. About sundown we watched them pass down on the bottoms of a little stream, now called Union Creek. They then fed leasurly toward the water giving us time to reach within shooting distance just as they were passing down to the creek bed for a drink.

A magnificent buck, larger than any of the rest, remained standing upon the bank with head erect, and his huge antlered crown catching the crimson rays of the fast sinking sun. He stood, indeed, a monarch of the woods, and with a haughty gallantry born of his kind, he measured with his eye the surrounding landscape with a suspicious unrest. Did his sense of smell detect the presence of his unsated enemies, as they lay crouching in the grass an hundred yards away? We were divining his mind in about this way, when at a whispered signal we fired our unerring rifles at his breast. His disappearance was as sudden and complete as the transit of a ghost.

We arose with baffled expressions on our countenances and started forward plainly hearing the departing animals crushing

through the heavy underbrush across the stream. When we reached where the big elk had stood, crimson blood clots were found spurted on the green grass, The trail of blood led across the stream where it mingled among the other tracks. Up over the bank we followed, when on a little island, shaded by a few big trees the proud beast was found stilled in death.

As dark was creeping upon us, we concluded to build a fire and spend the night in carving up our game. The smell of blood again brought out the unmusical wolves, who whiled the tedious night hours away in a bedlam of discordant noises from the bluffs.

A little Indian dog came timidly into our camp at midnight. The little stray was evidently now a consort of the coyotes, but being less timid or more hungry had ventured in on the chances of our pity and help or our inclination to destroy. He wagged his tail in glee, at our soft words accompanied by a chunk of meat, though the first streaks of light in the eastern sky found him trotting out with a full belly to join his less fortunate but wiser companions.

As it was easier, under the circumstances,

to move our camp to the elk, as the meat to the camp, we soon brought down our effects and made permanent camp near the junction of the creek with the Elkhorn. Here on a grassy raise of ground near a grove of willow, a comfortable cabin was erected, for fall, and mayhap winter quarters.

When everything was completed and the united voice said "well done," we stored our wealth within the cabin and felt a conscious security as the result of our work; but, alas!

The chilly nights of October were upon us. The surrounding prairies were fast putting on their yellow coat, while trees were losing their leaves. Our trap line only brought in a moderate revenue, for here as at the plum patch camp, Castor Fiber understood how to circumvent the trappers' arts. Now and then a kitten, or a two year old, lost their caution and their hide, but a four pound hide stretched on a grape vine, was a rarity about the camp.

One windy morning, we each started out to attend seperate lines. About eleven o'clock as I reached my line's end and was returning toward camp, a great cloud of black smoke rose up suddenly in the direction Eufale had taken. When first noticed it was many miles

away, but the wind then blowing at a velocity of about forty miles an hour, soon brought it sweeping down among the high and dry grass along the bottom lands. The rank underbrush then caught fire, soon extending to the large whitened cottonwoods, that had been deadened by previous fires, and now quickly licked up by the hot flames. The air became stifling and filled with black smoke, falling ashes and burnt particles.

I had neglected to provide a necessary precaution in such an emergency, namely, a few matches to protect oneself by backfiring; so but one alternative was left—as the appalling mass came veering toward me—and that was to make speed for the river and stand a partial immersion until the danger was over.

After the main sweep of fire had passed, I started for our cabin, and arrived at the place to find that the domicile had disappeared and a few charred logs were smouldering on its site. Everything was destroyed. The steel springs of the traps were overheated and ruined. The furs were all destroyed, even those that were drying in hoops, and hanging high up in limbs of trees. In truth our company possessions were now limited to the few traps fortunately setting out along the water line.

A consultation was held by the disheartened members of the firm. Buffalo announced his acceptance of the situation as presented, and speaking for himself, thought he had sufficient amusement in trapping off his summer's wages, and now would look up some other occupation.

Our remaining traps were gathered together and deposited in cache on a point of bench and where they still remain, for all the writer knows, though the site that marks them teems with active life,—for here a flourishing county seat now stands—the hope of its patrons and prey of its "boomers."

The Gopher wended his way down the river to the West Point settlement, while Buffalo and myself, after thirty hours walking with "frog on toast" for grub, reached Columbus, the busy little town at the junction of Loup Fork and Platte River. Thus ended our autumn trap along the Elkhorn River.

CHAPTER VIII.

Wolfers and Wolfing.

WOLF skin overcoats becoming a part of the uniform of soldiers of portions of the Russian army, and the popularity of the wolf robe in all fur wearing countries, made the demand steady and profitable to the fur dealer and the wolf trapper, so that new and more systimatic ways were devised to destroy wolves for their fur value.

About the year 1865, those trappers who made wolf killing a specialty, became generally termed wolfers. In those days large herds of the buffalo still roamed over many parts of the Great Plains, though even at that date their range limits became so circumscribed that they were divided into two great divisions, the northern and southern.

The southern range constituted that portion

of the plains south of Platte River, reaching down to the northern borders of the State of Texas, while the northern range, stretched from the Platte northward to the Saskatchewan Valley, in Her Majesty's domain.

Following every buffalo herd, were packs of ravenous wolves that watched warily for wounded or decrepit buffalo that would fall an easy prey to their savage onslaught. Old bulls, no longer able to stand the bluffs and butts of their younger fellows, were forced to the outskirts there in turn to meet the dreaded wolf. While buffalo were ever careful to give protection to their young, their aged especially the males, were literally "turned out to die," when no longer able to hold their own in a single butting combat.

Every band of buffalo great or small, was, therefore, encircled by gangs or packs of wolves, coyotes, foxes and swifts. The three latter were ranged on the outer circle, and forced to wait, as it were, for second table.

With a full knowledge of the movements of his game, the wolfer riggs up an outfit similar to that of the hunter or the trapper with the exception of traps and baits. In the place of these, he supplies himself liberally with strychnine poison.

LONG DOG THE TRAPPER KILLER.
Chief of a mixed band of Sioux outlaws, who ranged along the Upper Missouri between the years 1865 and 1885.

If it was in the autumn, he moved slowly in the wake of a buffalo herd, making open camp, and shooting down a few of the beasts, and after ripping them open, saturating their warm blood and intestines with from one to three bottles of strychnine to each carcass.

After his line of poisoned buffalo has been put out to his notion, the wolfer makes camp in a ravine or coulee and prepares for the morrow.

With the first glimmer of light in the eastern sky, he rises, makes his fire, and cooks his coffee, then hitches up, if he has a team, or saddles up if with packs, and follows his line to the finish. Around each buffalo carcass will probably be from three to a dozen dead wolves, which he packs off some distance from his baits, and skins them.

The most frequented winter grounds of the professional wolfers on the southern plains were along the Republican and Smoky Hill Rivers of western Kansas, and the country about the neighborhood of the Staked Plains in northern Texas. The northern wolfer found their best grounds along the Milk, Musselshell and Judith Rivers, and around the Bear Paw Mountains of Montana, and the the Peace River country in Manitoba.

The northern wolfers had the business well systemized, and while many lost their lives by Indian hostility, and the exposure incident to that kind of life, yet many of them made small fortunes at times, but an infatuation born of the calling held them as in a serpents charm until some reverse in his affairs, left him where he began—in vigorous poverty.

The wolfer's winter life was much the same in his general rounds as his autumn experience. If on the plains near camps of hostile Indians, a small party gets together, form a common camp and erect a "dug out," a kind of half underground house. These dug outs can be made warm and comfortable. Being thus partly below the prairie level they are enabled to resist the bitter cold, blowing blizzards that sweep over the Great Plains with terrible fury at intervals during the winter months.

These underground habitations are also used by the wolfers to thaw out the frozen carcasses of the wolves and foxes so that they could be skinned.

A few days warm sun often neutralizes the poison put in the buffalo carcass, so that the

effect is only to sicken the wolf that eats the poisoned meat. It then wanders off alone to die by inches in some secluded place out of the lines, and being undiscovered, a loss to the wolfer. Other times these victims of the poison recovers from its fits with the loss of their coat, and no phantom of horror presented itself in such ghastly way, as the reappearance of a sick and famished wolf, with a hide denude of fur or hair, staggering around in a dazed sort of way in search of food to prolong life. Such a sight will sometimes haunt a wolfer from his calling—callious though his nature to suffering may be.

The Indians have an especial antipathy to the wolfer. Poisoned wolves and foxes in their dying fits often slobber upon the grass, which, becoming sun dried holds its poisonous properties a long time, often causing the death months or even years after, of the pony, antelope, buffalo or other animal feeding upon it. The Indians losing their stock in this way feel like making reprisals, and often did.

The writer well remembers a case of strychnine's far reaching effects. On one of the

closing days of my trapping experience, a companion and myself were wolfing and trapping around Lake Mandan. We were also accompanied by a large greyhound, formerly the property of General Custer. While out attending some otter traps, we came to a staked beaver skeleton, which I remembered of poisoning and putting out as a wolf bait five winters before. The dog commenced to play with it, then to licking it, when we were pained to see him fall over in a fit and die. The hound had been notable one. He had followed his former master on his last charge at the Little Big Horn, and made his way alone to Fort Abraham Lincoln, where he arrived on the second night after that battle.

Wolves and buffalo passed off the face of the plains about the same time, though a few coyotes still remain, and an occasional buffalo wolf. These hang around the great cattle herds, and the professional wolfer has merged his occupation with that of the cow boy and the shepherd.

CHAPTER IX.

On the Loup Fork of Platte River—Pawnee Indians as Guests—Bloody Trail—Eating the Mink—Hunters and Trappers as Dreamers.

AFTER fully recruiting from the misfortunes incident to the Elkhorn trapping expedition, I entered into a contract with a business firm to cut the timber from a small island on the Loup Fork, about six miles up from its junction with Platte River.

A comfortable cabin was constructed, but was hardly finished in its appointments before a band of Pawnee Indian visitors made a crossing on the ice—for it was now the month of December—and proceeded to pitch their tents in semicircle, in front of my habitation. There were six lodges of them or about thirty, all told, in the party.

The chief of the band answered to the name of Coolahouse, or "the old man." They

were of the Skeedee or Wolf band of Pawnees, who are more nearly related to the Arickarees of the Upper Missouri, than either of the three remaining divisions of that Indian nation.

Many of the men wore their hair roached, having the appearance of the familiar picture of the helmet crowned Roman in the days of the early Punic wars. But in their clothing, poor as it was, there were no pickings for the rag man. Shirts they had none, or any substitute save the robe of the buffalo. Their moccasins were of the same material. Their leggens were of the skins of antelope, and with huge ear rings gaily suspended, their dress was complete. The women used the same material, with a little difference in style in the general make-up. The children even in the coldest days, dressed like Cupid shorn of his wings but retaining his bow and arrow.

In other words these Indians were miserably poor. Their main village or town was on Beaver Creek, some fifteen miles above, on the Platte, while three thousand of them were roaming for game and some starved to death.

Coolahcuse had a proposition to make. His people, as I must say were [illegible]

I must also see plenty of beaver sign along the river, and wolves and coyotes on the prairies. He then suggested that if I would tend strictly to my traps and baits—a new outfit I had lately bought—he would see that my wood cutting and sawing would go on just the same. He would attend to that. They were in need of food and wanted the carcasses of all the trapped and poisoned animals.

The Pawnee chieftain stood by his word. After catching my first beaver, I took the skinned carcass out to the prairie and tying a stout string to it started off dragging it along on the snow like a boy with his sled. This is what wolfers call "running a bloody trail." It is resorted to by them in a scarcity of draw baits.

One fresh killed beaver has the "drawing" power of a dead horse or buffalo. The wolves or coyotes, always partial for beaver flesh, and owing to its peculiar odor, the scent is easily followed. For this reason the wolfer prefers beaver carcasses to that of any other when running out one of his bloody trails.

On this occasion I made a semicircle trail of about three miles, dropping an occasional bit

of meat, and about every two hundred yards or so, a poisoned "pill." This pill is made by placing a few grains of strychnine in some tried out grease, cooled and hardened. But unless the poison is first wrapped in a bit of tissue or other soft paper, it is soon apt to dessolve in the grease and lose its strength.

Both water and wolf lines brought fair returns, and the Indians seemed to feel happy over even a dish of poison wolf broth. The stomach of the wolf was always removed, and the meat thoroughly parboiled. It was a hard mess for human stomachs; yet it was life to these starving Indians.

Mink skins were still worth five dollars to fur buyers, and as I found considerable sign of them under cliff piles and around air holes I allowed my interest in the Indians to lack a little, and gave some attention to trapping after profitable fur bearers.

By following some mink sign one day I trailed them to an ice gorge where a pony had been drowned, and which the mink were feeding upon. An investigation and trial soon convinced me that horse flesh was a good drawing winter bait for mink, and for skunks and badgers as well.

While superstition in some form enters largely in the life of every human being—deny as they may—yet I believe from my observations and experience with hunters, trappers and wolfers, that as a class, they are fully up if not a little ahead of the average in their respect and reverence for the omens of rigid fate, and a glimpse of the future as unraveled through the interpretations of a clear headed dreamer.

Many of the Indian superstitions are copied, especially whatever is inimical to their calling. Their various charms- the lucky gun, the lucky trap, is but another name for the luck bag or "medicine" of the Indians.

The dreamer, probably, enters more largely into, and influences their actions than the prognostics of the totem. Joseph's Egyptian occupation, as dream interpreter would never have taken root under the canopy of haughty Pharaoh had that august personage lived in the nineteenth century. Some hunter or trapper of the western wilds, and not Joseph would have held the light.

While many of these frontiersmen interpret their own dreams or regulate the efficiency and power of their charms to suit them-

sexes, yet many of them take a universal form as far as a hunter, trapper and wolfers calling is concerned.

A hunter will not part with his lucky gun nor will a trapper sell his lucky trap, while the unlucky one in the absence of a ready purchaser, is often consigned to the muddy bosom of the watery depths, or smashed to pieces over a pile of rocks.

To dream of blood is generally recognized as a symbol of good luck, and also to dream of clear running water; while on the other hand muddy water means bad luck; also the dreaming of losing teeth or the breaking or bending of a gun barrel, or a failure to fire the gun in an act of hunting.

On the strength of their beliefs in omens, many of this class, will arise in the morning to buy or sell their "chances" of the day's catch, to their camp partners—the offering or bidding regulated by the way the dreams were interpreted.

Up to the time of my encampment on Coolahouse's Island for the Pawnee claimed sovereignty, I had not joined the trappers in their dream revelation theory, but an incident of this kind occurred, that if it did

not make a convert, at least made me respectful to those who were.

On my rounds to the traps I often noticed a small grove or bunch of trees standing out alone on the prairie level, and about a mile back from the river. Some time the spring following, and after I returned from a mid winter trap on Shell Creek, I dreamed of going to this bunch of trees and finding a clear pond of water filled with sun fish, and five little spotted pigs, each in a trap, and all dead.

The dream keeping uppermost in my mind, I gathered up a kit of traps and went to investigate. I found the pond and sunfish just as I had dreamed, but instead of dead pigs, there were plenty of mink sign, so set the traps. I did not return for three mornings after, and then found five drowned mink in the traps.

CHAPTER X.

Otter and Otter Trapping—A Mid-Winter Trap on Shell Creek.

LAND otter, or the otter of the inland rivers, lakes and streams, so named in contradistinction to the sea otter or those that live along the coasts bordering the ocean, are like the beaver fast disappearing, and from the same cause—their fur value.

These inland otter are, or rather were found along every stream of water where fish, fowl and frogs abound, for on them they live.

A full grown otter will measure from its nose to the tip of its tail, from three to four feet and will weigh from thirty to thirty-five pounds. Their legs are short and very sinewy and strong. The mouth is wide and in facial resemblance have much the appearance of an ordinary bull dog. The eyes are small, black and piercing. In proportion to

its legs the body is long, though the tail, which has a peculiar flat shape tapering to the tip, is as long as the body proper.

The females have a litter of from two to four every summer, which generally run about with the mother until the spring following. The young then remain in a group by themselves, but after becoming grown, they seek other mates.

The fur of an otter varies in color from a dark brown to a glossy black. As is the case with most fur bearers, the more northern the darker the fur becomes. But sporadic cases of "silk" otter are liable to be found in most any latitude. These "silk otter" have a glossy fur, highly prized by the wild Indians for hair decorating purposes. A good horse is a fair price for a silk otter skin.

An otter's evenness in color is not so well distributed as that of the beaver, on account of a very light brown stripe under the throat extending down to the belly. But the fur will not fade by age and exposure as does the beaver after being tanned and "made up."

All otter fur finds value in the eyes of the wild Indian. The Sioux and other nations who wear their hair long, braid it with strips

of otter skin. A profusion and wealth of otter are lavishly displayed at most of their great ceremonial dances.

The general habits of the otter is something akin to the mink, but there is much difference in their sign. Instead of jumping by even leaps, with but the visable sign of two tracks as mink do, they seem to jump by fours similar to the skunk, whose sign to the unpracticed eye, is often taken for otter.

An [illegible] habit distinctly their own is that [illegible] every few yards when traveling [illegible]. They are great travelers, [illegible] land journeys of many miles in search [illegible] suitable fishing creek.

In [illegible] streams they "cut ends," and always select the narrow necks of land for their [illegible]. These [illegible] are often worn [illegible] by constant use, and are a glaring "sign" to the trapper.

The otter have an eye, that they can use readily to discover their game under the water. Thus they are successful fishers, and good sight under water, also stands them in need of the trapper's wiles. An old otter "up to trap" reels all the strategy a trapper can use to "fill a trap" with him. A mud covered

trap under water, in the centre of his coasting slide will outwit him. Although even then old otter catchers assert they can smell the iron. Young and inexperienced otter are, however, as easily trapped as mink.

When undisturbed, an otter in fishing a stream will travel at the rate of about five miles per day. They follow from the mouth of the stream to the head, then return by the same route. A trapper on noticing fresh sign by observing the course taken, can, if he is familiar with the length of the stream, set his trap with a good guess what night he will catch it.

When studying the future prospect of a western trapper's life, I concluded to make a specialty of otter trapping, during the winter thaws, and acting accordingly, on the January thaw of 1867, I closed the doors of my cabin on Coolahouse Island, and hired a man with his team to take my outfit to the outward settlement on Shell Creek, the Tes-cah-peedus Keets of the Pawnee.

This stream flowing into the Platte River near the north bend, is about thirty miles in length, headwaters nearly opposite the Pawnee village and about eighteen miles distant, due east.

I had noticed otter sign on crossing the creek from the unlucky Elkhorn expedition, and later confirmation in a talk with the Pawnees. These Indians had represented the headwaters as a mass of warm springs, well used by mink and otter as winter quarters. I found the Indians correct, and made a good catch of both classes of furs.

Two notches were cut in my "coo" stick on this trip. One was on the almost providential finding of a cave during a bitter blizzard; when otherwise I would have been without shelter. The other was the timely arrival of two trappers, Scully and St. Clair, who thereby saved me from an unfriendly raid of the educated but bad Rodgers and his band of Petohow-eli, or Republican Pawnees. They had just returned from the Republican River where they were charged with killing four white trappers for their otter and other furs.

CHAPTER XI.

"Old Dakota."

MAY DAY, 1864, was urshered into the "Land of the Dakotas," with a chilly raw wind, that blew with wild fury over its sheltterless plains.

For the two weeks previous, in the company, of Trapper Comstock, we fished the mouth of the Dakota, James or "Jim" River, with canoe and spear for the buffalo fish, which were found in shoals in this neighbourhood.

The buffalo fish in that section are a favorite spring food. They usually weigh from six to ten pounds, and are of good flavor.

On this May day morning above referred to we had reached Stanage's Ferry from Mr. Comstock's residence, where his wife and a lady companion, were waiting in the chilly air for the drowsy ferrymen to take them over the river to meet the outgoing Iowa stage.

While thus in discomfort, our attention was riveted on an apparation gliding around a neighbouring bend. It was a canoe of light color and peculiar shape, with the rays of the morning sun streaming against it. The bow was piled high with furs and skins, many of them still drying in hoops, and fantasticly arranged on larboard and starboard. On a pile of beaver pelts in the stern, set an old man with a long white beard, and flowing locks of snowy hair, which followed his motions as he deftly handled his glistening paddle in the wind-lashed waters.

When nearly opposite us, and without a word being spoken, the canoe suddenly pointed to the shore where we were standing, and with a polite courtesy, the old man asked in broken English—with a French accent, if any of us desired to cross over the river. The ladies were pointed out, when he invited them on his well laden craft, and a few strokes of the paddle placed them on the opposite bank. Then with a wave of his hand and "good day" he continued on his way singing snatches of French Canadian songs, until the curved river hid the canoe and its strange occupant from view, and with

this ended my last glimpse of "Old Dakota."

Of the early antecedents of "Old Dakota," little or nothing is known to the early white settlers of the Dakotas, outside of the fact that he came to the Sioux country from Canada about the year 1820; was a trapper by profession when he came, and first employed by the noted Emanuel Liza, and then Pierre Chouteau, after which he became a free trapper and Indian trader. His real name is unknown, even to the few with whom he associated, and the sobriquent by which the memory of him is now known was applied to him during the last twenty years of his life.

As will be seen from a map, South Dakota, east of the Missouri River is watered by three considerable streams,—the Big Sioux, Vermillion and Dakota or "Jim" Rivers.

These streams are not navigable except by small boats, such as skiffs and canoes, and even these find formidable obstructions in low water during the dry seasons. The Big Sioux and Dakota River are several hundred miles in length, and were navigated almost their entire distance by these small crafts, during the spring and early summer months.

In the earlier years of the reign of the fur companies, these streams were looked upon as valuable territory to them, and great risks were sometimes run by the trappers to filch the game from them, unknown to the Indians.

When "Old Dakota" set up business for himself, he adopted the tactics of his French Canadian countrymen, by changing the language, but not the text of the old saw—that "when among Indians do as the Indians do." Much of this old man's life had therefore been spent in their camps along these rivers above named.

His dealings with the Indians was much in the nature of a commission merchant between them and the regular fur companies with a very narrow margin in his own profits.

From the early spring until late in the fall, he could be found in one of these rivers, either in solitary camp or with an Indian family, trapping some choice fur beavers resort, or gliding along in a canoe as described in the opening of this chapter. In his earlier years he made his principal stay among the Sioux of the "Dirt Lodges" on Firesteel Creek that puts into the Dakota River sixty miles from its junction with the Missouri.

Immediately following the Santee Sioux outbreak in Minnesota, in 1862, several murders were committed in the southern part of Dakota Territory, by hostile Indians. In 1863, the Waterman family, living on the Nebraska side of the Missouri nearly opposite the mouth of the Dakota River, were found to have been murdered. About the same time two men were found dead in their blankets at Greenway's Ferry, on the Dakota, some four miles from Yankton, the new territorial capital. And a few months later, the Sioux City and Fort Randall stage was attacked by Indians at Choteau Creek.

All of these depredations happening in the neighborhood of Yankton, the people were easily influenced to become suspicious of the friendly Yankton Sioux, and wild rumors of "Old Dakota" being a spy were freely circulated, breeding an ill feeling against him.

But justice to the old Frenchman's memory, and of the red Yanktons, compels me to say that these outrages were committed by distant bands of roving hostiles, with the possible exception of the attack on the stage.

And further to the old man's credit, may it be said, that of the Indians with whom he

intimately associated,—the Sioux of the Dirt Lodges; none more faithfully kept the peace with their white neighbors during those troublesome times than they. And yet when all was over, few suffered worse from the land grabber,—and none bore it with a more patient resignation.

In truth their chief, the Stormy Goose—the Sioux Quaker—whose pleadings for his people's homes will live long among the records of Dakota's Territorial land history. And StormyGoose had for a life long friend and counsellor, "Old Dakota" the veteran trapper.

CHAPTER XII.

"Signing Up" the Niobrara—Paper Towns for Eastern Investors—A Beautiful Prospect—The Poncas.

JUNE 15th, 1868, I crossed the Missouri, and rode out of sight from Dakota's capital on the back of a vigorous mule, taking a northerly direction, intending to "sign up" the Niobrara River as far west as the Piney creeks.

Seven miles along the Missouri, through beautiful groves of cottonwood and oak—alternate with openings, with a marginal rim of chalky bluffs, that hid at times the morning sun. Beyond the chalk line the path leads over a "second bench," where the ruins of Teepe Ota and Wakpominy, which buried the financial hopes of the projectors of these "might have been" towns among the debris.

Further along was the town of Frankfort, that boasted of a lone log cabin. These with a "city" on the raging Emanual, across, and further up the "Big Muddy," that drooped from the hour of its christening, though annointed in name with biblical Askalon.

Twenty miles or more, and Bon Homme Island is reached. It was on this Island, that the ancient fortifications were found and described by the famous explorers—Lewis and Clark, in 1804. The works, most probably, being a fortified winter camp of the Aricaree built upon great sand dunes to tide over the spring floods. Almost all trace had now disappeared, as the Island had moved further down the river. To explain more clearly, the channel cross currents had cut away the head of the Island, while a like counter movement had filled it in at the lower end.

At thirty miles, I had entered and passed the Santee Agency, where the women and children, and the surviving remnant of the men who had participated in the Sioux war of Minnesota, were now quietly located.

Eight miles further and Bazille Creek, was passed. Here the blue lodges of Big Eagle's camp—also, Santee Sioux—were pitched and

the inmates sweltering under temporary arbors cut from neighboring trees.

The level plain marking the mouth of the Niobrara now came in view, and standing alone, like a castle of other days, stood the tenentless, ten thousand dollar hotel, that was to have housed and fed the loiterers and wayfarers of Niobrara City.

Half a mile beyond the big building, were located two small trading stores, whose proprietors did a thrifty business trading their goods to passing Indians. At one of these places, I passed the night.

Early the next morning, I again started on my journey, taking a westward course following the windings of the Niobrara along a "blind" trail. When the sun rose and cast its prismatic rays over the verdure of the wide valley, it formed a beautiful picture for the eye and mind to rest on, and the heart to fill with gratitude to the all ruling; all seeing power. There is a sermon given us that all can understand in any solitary ramble on a fine summer morning.

The sweet smelling wild roses were in great profusion on every side; besides cluster upon cluster of other wild flowers

ers of every shade and of every hue. Wild strawberries reddened the unused trail, and sparkling, cool water gushed from wayside springs that would have rivaled those of the "down east" land. In truth the first few miles up the Niobrara valley from where it joins the great Missouri, comes nearer filling the measure—or did at that time—of the extravagant language of the land "boomer." Here indeed, if anywhere in this western land the "summer's sun loves to linger."

After the Verdegris Creek was passed, I took the range of bluffs following the river so that there would be less danger of meeting an Indian war party, as at this time nearly every neighboring tribe had parties out hunting for each others scalps; and some of them would not object to taking white men's especially if returning homeward in dissappointment.

Fifteen miles from the Missouri, and on the north side of the Niobrara, the ruins of the old Ponca Agency could be seen and beyond that site, the broken buttes that marked the line of the windings of the Keya Paha or Turtle Head River. Here I observed a band of buffalo scampering over the distant prairie

in evident alarm, and though I watched with some suspense no Indians appeared to be following them.

After riding several miles further, I dismounted at a water hole and put the night in. The musquitoes were so ravenous that I moved on the windy side of a high butte, but the move availed nothing after the calm at midnight. A reflection of the situation on the night's "wake" suggested if the future farmers of the Niobrara Valley, raised as large crops of grain in a "wet season" as the musquito crop would be, they could laugh to scorn the mortgage shark and the county assessor's levy.

Bright and early on the morning of the 17th, I rode out to the Little Piney and commenced a systematic "sign up" for game. Elk, black tailed deer and antelope were found to be plentiful: also some white tailed deer. As the principal object of the trip was the water game, and especially otter, I examined the creeks carefully with no very flattering result. There were some otter and mink sign, but very little beaver. The result on the whole was a disappointment, so I retraced my route to the Niobrara River with

the intention of making a careful inspection, also, of its banks for water game sign.

While the time of the year was against an accurate sign up, yet if the game was there they would leave some marks to make their presence known.

I had followed the banks along for probably ten miles, when about to enter a cottonwood grove I smelled smoke and my mule too, became uneasy. Thinking it a war party, who often hide during the day when approaching an enemies camp, so turned about and thought to retreat in good order while there was an even chance. But to my dismay the mule set up a "veal," with intonations loud and deep, and I was answered by mules and ponies in the timber.

To attempt an escape now would be out of the question, as the mule was tired, and those of the war party, if such they were, would be fresh and rested. I was in suspense, but had no long to wait.

First a cautious movement was observed in a clump of bushes, and a feeling that they had the drop on me, as matters stood. Next came a glistening gun barrel, then a bronze form. Standing erect, and patting his naked

breast with his disengaged hand, he exclaimed in a bass voice:

"Meah Ponca."

But the bass voice had the sweetness of tenor just then. He was of the friendly Ponca Indian tribe, and that itself was a relief for the nerves. He lost no time in parleying but invited me to dismount and follow his way. That way led to a sand hill opening, where were pitched two skin lodges, and half a dozen Indians of both sexes, scattered about. No stock were at first seen, but a few mules and ponies were soon led forth to their accustomed place with picket pin and lareat. The good natured women of the party now assured me, that my loud voiced mule had thrown them in a panic. They were on the lookout for a camp of Brule Sioux, whose sign they had noticed across the river, and from whom they were now in hiding. My presence was now looked upon as a welcome reinforcement, and every attention was given me by a people, ever generous in their homes to a friendly stranger. I was presingly invited to remain their guest for the night. No host ever accquitted himself better than this brother of the Ponca chief. Stumbling

Bear. Feasts of strawberries, pemmican for lunch, and a bed of newly tanned buffalo robes for a royal roost.

There is a saying, "after the feast the giver shakes his head." Not so with my Ponca friends. The whole family gathered about me on my departure next morning, and made prodigal offers of a continuence of attention and good cheer, if I would remain their guest during the remainder of the hunt.

I continued my homeward route along the river's course. Evidence was not wanting to show that the scarcity of water game, was due to the skill of my Ponca friends and their Omaha relatives. The castaway trap stake and toggle, marked the sign of the trapper plainly.

In a clump of cedars near the mouth of Verdegris Creek, I noticed, on my way up some one building a cabin. Stopping on my return, I found a white settler building a place for himself. He was alone, well up in years, but in a cheerful vein. Two miles below was the cowboys crossing. Three Texan herders were killed at this place six weeks later, by a Sioux war party. The old man in the cedars was found shot to death and

scalped about the same time, and most probably by the same raiders.

A few words more about the Poncas before I leave them and their country. A small tribe, numbering less than a thousand, with language similar to the Omahas, the Poncas had been able to call the lower Niobrara Valley their own for two hundred years or more. A compact built and healthy people they have little to ask. Generous in peace, brave and self reliant in war, plodding along in the line marked out by their grand parents; accepting new conditions slowly. They loved their wild life; had plenty, and saw no necessity for change. They courted the frendship of their white neighbors wherever practical. In short the Poncas as a tribe are, or were, of the better class of wild Indians.

In April 1869, on my way to Fort Berthold, I took a spin to the Ponca Agency before engaging passage on an up bound steamer. The Gregory brothers, two of President Lincoln's appointments, had been serving the Government as agent and trader there and left the affairs of the agency in fair shape to

Dr. Potter, President Johnson's appointee. In all my rounds of the agencies I never recollect of seeing such a happy condition of affairs between agent and Indians, as at that place. Few school rooms were brought under more uniform decipline than there. No pedagogue, ever received more loving obedience from his scholars, than was awarded the agent by these simple minded Poncas. These impressions, were not alone mine, but the sentiment universal among visitors. The Poncas had plenty to eat and cared carefully for their herds, and did some farming—to be sure, in a small way.

We will pass on a few years. We will pass to the administration of President Hayes—an excellent executive in some respects, but the worst administration for the helpless Indian, of any of the Presidents since the Government was founded. This might have been laid upon his Secretary of the Interior, whose zeal to make places for his nationality, overlooked their fitness for the work assigned. Or it may have been the fault of his commissioner of Indian Affairs, who had the instincts of a brute.

The Poncas suffered in common with other friendly tribes. They had already given up all their land but a small stip; but now, this too, was wanted Contractors, who fatten on Government jobs, were ready—they are always ready. To the Indian Territory the Poncas must be sent. Vain were their protests. Soldiers were used, and the hapless people forced into the contractors wagons with ropes, bayonets and sabres. They were placed in a malarial spot, in that southern land and missionaries invited to look after them.

Many tried to escape and make their way to their old home. My intertainer of the "sign up" was among the first killed that was trying the desperative alternative of escape. His brother with a small party finally reached the Omahas after fifty days journey through midwinter snow. The generous Omahas once more came to the rescue. Once more they donated land to plundered members of their unhappy race, and the disheartened band enjoined from attempting to proceed further in the direction of their old village. They were advised against trying to relocate on land now probaly occupied by white settlers in the Niobrara country.

While busy plowing his new lands, the Ponca chief was arrested for escaping from the Indian Territory. He was taken to the house to prepare for the return journey. Many of his things were still unpacked. To an officer explaining why he left this reservation in the Indian Territory, the Indian said:—

"We counted our dead for awhile, but when all my children and half of the tribe were dead, we did not take any notice of anything much. When my son was dying, he begged me to take his bones back to his old home, if ever I got away. In that little box are the bones of my son; I have tried to take them back to be buried with our fathers."

To some fair minded and generous hearted citizens of Omaha, it is but justice to say, a stay of proceedings was entered in court on the Ponca's behalf, and the few survivors of the tribe, now tend their little flocks and herds once more, in the beautiful valley of the Niobrara.

CHAPTER XIII.

Badgers, Raccoons, Skunks and Muskrats, and How to Trap them.

BADGERS are found scattered about in out of the way places in nearly every western State and Territory. They have much the general characteristics of the common ground hog, found so plentifully in many of the eastern states, and like them are a help rather than a harm to any vacant tract they may chance to occupy.

The badger is a heavy set, short legged quadruped, about eighteen inches in length, when full grown, and weighs near thirty pounds. The fur is an iron grey color with a yellowish tinge under the belly and on its sides. A white stripe commencing between the eyes running party down the back, with a dark line on each side of this stripe. The fur is longer on the sides than on the back, giving the animal a flat appearance.

The fore feet of the badger is thick and very stout, and with fore claws an inch long. With such instruments they can dig very fast and deep in the hardest and dryest of soils. The are tenacious and hard fighters and will flee on man's approach but will turn and fight a dog.

I remember a case of the badger's fighting qualities at Fort Stevenson, during the summer of 1872. Interpreter Brown captured a half grown badger and brought it to the post where it was turned loose among the dogs, cleaning out all the worthless curs of the garrison. It fought for life and liberty, and and well deserved both, but among the victims of its prowess, was the interpreter's blooded bull terrier for which offense poor badger was slain.

The badger is solitary in its nature, and is generally seen traveling alone. Like the ground hog they are good weather prognosticators, and know enough to take advantage of and spin around in every thaw in winter. They are not a very prolific animal, the female seldom bearing or raising more than two each year. Its food consists principally of meat when it can get it. Otherwise it will live on

certain roots and plants. They are inveterate foes of moles, field mice and gophers, and thus protects the farmers from being over run by these pests where badgers are allowed to live undisturbed.

The trapping of a badger is easily accomplished. A number two trap, set in the mouth of the hole they are using, is one of the successful ways. The trap, chain and stake, should be covered with loose earth, and care taken to allow the pan a chance to give, so that the trap can spring when trod upon. Another way to trap them and the method I usually followed, was a "call" to a flesh bait The bait should be staked down in the neighborhood of their burrow, and the trap and chain covered.

As the fur of the badger is reckoned among the furs of the lower grade, the market price for a clean well stretched skin is from sixty cents to one dollar.

The raccoon is so well known that a description of them is almost unnecessary, as they are found in almost any considerable timber tract between the Great Plains and the Atlantic coast, as well as in some of the Pacific States.

They are somewhat smaller than a badger, with a short bulky body: a long tail encircled with rings. The fur is long and thick; grey near the roots, turning to a kind of a blackish color toward the surface.

The nose of the raccoon is long and pointed; eyes large and ears catlike. They have firm legs, and with their hind ones make a flat track similar to a porcupine or bear.

Raccoon are flesh eaters, but are also fond of certain fruits, nuts and corn. In fact they have epicurian tastes of no mean pretentions.

Notwithstanding that their name has passed into a proverb as typical of all that is cunning and crafty, his coonship often finds himself inveigled in a trapper's cold steel clasps; yet he neither shows the ingenuity of the fox or beaver, similarly caught, in his efforts to escape. He imitates the muskrat, rather, in a patient resignation to accept his fate.

The raccoon's habits are in many respects similar to the mink: following along water courses in wild or timbered sections in search of their prey. In settled districts they occasionaly raid the poultry yard, and during the "roasting ear" season sometimes make havoc

in a farmer's cornfield, especially if it borders a timber tract. The frisky squirrel often suffers in reputation, for the raccoon's mischief in the cornfield.

The trap usually set for coon is a number two. They are set in narrow passages in runs or small creeks near their known haunts. A fresh meat bait, partly covered and hidden as in mink trapping is a successful way. But such a bait is as likely to catch a mink or a skunk, as a coon. To bait with a half husked ear of corn, would be more of a specialty for coon. In either set, for a front foot catch, the pan of the trap should not be placed further than five inches from the bait. The average paid by buyers for a well dried coon skin is from fifty cents to one dollar.

The fur of the skunk follows along on the fur buyer's lists with the badger and raccoon; with a tendency, of late years to lead them in price. The skunk or polecat is as common as raccoon or groundhog. And although not so destructive to poultry as mink or weasels, still the skunk is not very far behind them.

Their average weight is about eight or ten pounds. They have a black fur

with two wide white stripes its full length. The width of stripe varies, while some are stripeless. Their tail is long and bushy. They have feet shaped much the same as raccoons and porcupines, but have a peculiar short loping motion by fours, easily distinguished from the tracks of any other animal, in sand mud or snow.

Among the Sioux, Winnebagoes and some other Indian nations; the flesh of skunks is esteemed a great delicacy, and next to a fat dog ranks highest in the menu at their epicurian feasts. At ceremonial dances, no well regulated jumping artist of soaring pretensions, could enter the ring, keep time to the music of rattles and drum and sonorious song, without dragging a beaded polecat skin to his lively hopping heels

The skunk is trapped in about the same manner as mink are caught. In fact when both classes of animals are plentiful in the same neighborhood, a trap set for them is just as likely to catch a mink as a skunk. This is especially the case with a "call" to a fresh meat bait.

The muskrat need but little introduction. The little rodent being an inhabitant of every

creek, river and lake on the North American Continent. Though of the lower grade of fur bearing animals, their pelts seldom bringing over twenty-five cents in the markets, yet so prolific are they, that more money is made by trappers in general, from them than of any other special class of furs in the country. This is particularly the case in the lake regions of Minnesota where many thousands of dollars of raw muskrat furs are bought yearly from the trappers of that section.

And we might add further, that more money is made by furriers in general from the muskrat than of any other furs. Its pliability, softness and fine texture, renders it a fur when placed in the hands of an adept finisher, a good subject in the imitation of furs of a higher grade, so that it is often made to do duty in the furriers' show windows as elegant substitutes for fine and costly beaver, otter and pine martin "make ups."

The muskrat is considered next to the rabbit the easiest animal caught, on the trapper's catalogue. Like the rabbit in size, a small single spring trap is sufficient to hold them. They feed along the shores on flag, rush and other roots. In hunting feed they have cer-

tain paths and routes which they are constantly using. It is on these paths leading out to the bank the trapper sets his traps. They are placed on the trail in the water, and submerged about two inches.

In the spring they often congregate on a mound which can be readily noticed from the reddish stain of ground there. This will be found to be a successful place for the traps, and muskrats can be caught there nightly without scaring them. In shallow creeks, there are certain stones they frequently use which are also good places to set submerged traps. The oil of anise seed, obtainable in drug stores, is a good spring bait, used in a similar manner to that of baiting the beaver.

The general habits of the muskrat is similar to that of the beaver. In the lakes and lagoons of the north and west they live in large communities or villages. They build partly submerged houses in shallow places, ordinarily about three or four feet in height, bee hive shaped. When froze down by the rigors of winter, which is often the case, and can no longer use their subteranian passage ways, they literally "eat themselves out of house and home" by masticating the struc-

ture itself, which is made of a composition of rushes float weed and blue mud.

When the improvident little rodent is thus in hard luck the "spearing" trapper appears. This individual armed with a sharp pointed spear walks on the ice and thursts his weapon through the frail houses of the imprisoned animals and thus destroys them.

The bank muskrats are more fortunate in the winter as they cannot be so readily located as their kindred of the houses, though like them often suffer in a shortage of winter provender.

CHAPTER XIV.

Trapping at Painted Woods Lake, Heart River and Apple Creek, in North Dakota, 1871.

WHILE at odd intervals, during the two years of 1869-70, I had been giving some attention to hunting wolfing and trapping along the neutral or fighting grounds of beligerant Indians on the Missouri, between Forts Rice and Stevenson, it was not until the month of September 1871, that I became one of a party of three in a trapping and trading firm, thoroughly equipped to follow the business in a systematic way.

The two young members of the new firm were of varied experience. First we introduce Trapper Williams a whilom rafting pilot from the eddies and swirls of Wisconsin's turbulent rivers, and the other partner passed in his card as Hunter Mercer, who had taught school, killed deer, and hunted huckleberries in Pennsylvania's mountains,

On the evening of the 17th, of that month, we arrived at the prairie banks of the Lake of the Painted Woods, from our late rendezvous on the Missouri, some four miles below.

We made camp near a bunch of bushes facing the lake with a good view of the greater part of it. With the going down of the sun we stood looking upon scenes that never was our fortune but the once to see—an animal's earthly paradise.

The slanting rays of the sun shone full upon the shining fresh plastered houses of the industrious beaver, that stood upon the lake's edge like the gorgeous castles of Italy's watery Venice, of a past age.

Otter were swimming in plain sight, and without fear. Wild ducks, geese and brants, proudly crested the fanning waves in front of camp, unconcerned at our prescence. Even the antelope lost their timidity and stood in a soldierly line, on a bluff near by and watched in wonderment our movements about the fire and smoke.

In fact, generations of animals and birds had been born and reared there, since the last trapper, white or red, had put out trap and toggle around this lake's shore. Bu-

chaump, old and decrepit, was, like Cooper's hero of the Prairie, closing his remaining days in the lodges of his Indian friends. Jeff Smith was hopelessly blind: Bush was killed by the Yanktoneys; and poor old LaFrance had fallen across the trap he was setting by a pistol shot supposed to be fired by Bloody Knife. These were the last trappers of the old fur company days, and thirty years had now passed since the sign of their calling was last seen around the shores of this beautiful body of water.

The night with a moon clear-faced and in its full, threw its beams upon us as we lay within the folds of our blankets. The breeze of the day went down with the sun, and the air was calm and frost-laden. Our camp fire continued to blaze and seemed a danger signal for all the beasts and fowls within sight of its glare.

Elk whistled and deer snorted continuously from the dense jungle between the lake and the Missouri. Every living thing seemed as sleepless as ourselves. The coyote with his sharp bark and the wolf with the art of a voice throwing ventriloquist, help swell the din and confusion.

Strange noises now strain our waking ears. It sounds like some one beating the water with a huge board. These sounds multiply. It is the beaver's alarm, and the fowls and animals seem to understand it.

When the beaver commenced alarming each other, I felt no elation. No buoyancy of spirits at the good trapping prospects before us. Rather a feeling of regret at this self-assigned work. I would gladly have left this animal paradise undisturbed could I but know that it would remain so. But we were but an advance guard. We were on the proposed route of the Northern Pacific railway and soon this valley would be filled from every nation of people in northern Europe. And if the beaver was to be doomed we would make the first strike. If we could not save we would destroy.

At daybreak the next morning Williams and myself loaded the bull boat with traps and guns, took our seats and paddled up the lake through the flocks, which on our approach moved leasurly out of the way. Five otter followed in our wake, puffing, snorting and diving.

A heavy fog hung low, and this kept three

elk, bathing in a bayou from seeing us. Williams steadied the boat, while I reached a rifle and shot a large pronged buck dead. The other two being cows were permitted to escape.

On our return from signing up and setting out the traps, we boated the dead elk to the camp and commenced to cut it up and jerk or sun dry the meat. While all three were busy we were startled by shots and yells. We looked in the direction of our poor pony and saw that he was surrounded by about twenty Indians yelling with a loud uproar.

On discovering us they spread out like a fan and made toward us. At this, we jumped for our rifles and plunked ourselves in the grass. Some of the Indians commenced to yell "pah-don-ee" (Sioux name for Arricaree,) and they all halted but one. He advanced slowly bearing aloft a white flag. They were a war party of Gros Ventres and Mandans, looking for the scalps of Sioux stragglers. We presented them half of the fresh meat, when they all rode up in grand style, dismounted, and each broiled his own allotted share over the camp fire. After the lunch they remounted and rode away.

After having spent about one week with our trap line, well attended, we counted our pelts, and found about thirty beaver; one dozen otter; about twenty five wolves and foxes, and a lot of mink and other miscellaneous furs. Among the wolves, was a black buffalo wolf, a very rare animal in that section of country.

The week following was occupied by the Trapper and myself in a journey to Fort Berthold, described in Frontier and Indian Life, under the caption, "With a Gros Ventre War Party." About the 1st of October we reset the traps at the lake with profitable results; after which we freighted down our boats and packed the pony and commenced a journey "by land and sea" to the mouth of Heart River, some twenty-five miles down the Missouri; coming in on the west side. The morning of our departure a dead calm and a light mist hung over the river, so that a continual roar could be heard apparently coming from underneath the surface. At a little cottonwood point a mile below the place of starting we saw and heard what we thought was a man caught on a sawyer—a moving snag. When we came nearer the

strange object disappeared, and as we moved along, nothing but the sawyer in its perpetual motion could be observed. We then concluded that, perhaps it was some solitary boatman coming down from the mountains, and being asleep, his skiff ran foul of the moving snag and was capsized. But the Indians call the place Ghost Point, from strange, unaccountable objects being seen, or as they sometimes express it, "where people have medicine put over their eyes."

That evening we reached Heart River, when after landing I took a gun and traps to reconnoiter. At the edge of the willows I struck a band of elk and killed two large bucks. In the meantime Hunter Mercer could be seen riding down a band of antelope on the bluffs on the east side of the Missouri, on same ground where North Dakota's capital now stands.

We used much caution in trapping Heart River. General Whistler's military expedition to the Yellowstone River had returned followed closely by some of Chief Gall's Uncapapa Sioux. They had shot one officer and lassoed another to death. A colored cook was also caught and put to torture. All

happened on this stream above us; and the servant's take off was but a short distance from our trap line.

We did not swim our pony across the Missouri having finally concluded to encamp at the Otter Tail Crossing, on the east side, opposite the mouth of Heart. This was the crossing place of the Minnesota Santees when flying from General Sibley's pursuing column. Hundreds of carts and wagons abandoned by the Indians, were cut to pieces by the soldiers. This happened in July 1863. The cart remnants were now made to do duty in our camp arrangements.

While my partners would cross the river and tend the Heart River traps, I took charge of the company pony and put out a line of otter traps near the upper military crossing of Apple Creek, some ten miles away.

About the 20th of October, we pulled in both lines, Mercer returning to our headquarters at Painted Woods, while the Trapper and I continued with our bull boats to Sibley Island. Here Suttles and Miller, two young Canadians owned a successful woodyard. They had a strong stockade; horses and cattle, plenty of provisions and a celler full of

wine made from the native grape, of which the island abounded; and no neighbors within twenty-five miles.

After enjoying a short stay with these nabobs of the wilderness we continued trapping to within a few miles of Fort Rice, when our absent partner came to us with a newly purchased team, so closing up a successful autumn trap, we returned to the Painted Woods for winter quarters.

CHAPTER XV.

Eagles and Eagle Trapping.

EAGLES of the differant American varieties are found in considerable numbers in many parts of the Great Northwestern Plains. Along the Upper Missouri River, and eastern base of the Rocky Mountains, the famous war eagle holds sway, and rates that section his native heath.

This eagle, also sometimes called the calumet eagle, are the most beautiful of all the American eagles. They have a richly variegated color of black and white. Each wing have good sized circular spot in the middle, which is only visible when they are extended. The body is variously marked by black and white. The tail feathers are twelve in number and of unequal length They are pure white except about two inches of the tip, which is jet black. These tail

feathers made into a war bonnet is the proudest possession known to the wild Indian.

These war eagles are smaller than the bald or black eagle, are swifter in flight and more pugnacious. Their principal breeding places were formerly in the Black Hills, or inaccessible parts of the Little Missouri or Yellowstone Bad Lands. While the tail feathers of the others are used for decorative purposes, they have not the value of a war eagle's pluckings. The money market rate for these favored birds is one dollar for each tail feather, or a pony for a whole bird. A war bonnet of thirty six tail feathers will find a ready exchange from the Indians for a two hundred dollar mule.

War eagles do not appear on the Missouri from their breeding places until about September. Then small parties of Indians sally out to a place frequented by these kings of birds, and a ceremony gone though with to bring them to bait.

After a dream tells them the eagles will come, a deer is hunted up and killed, the trappers fasting the meanwhile. A pit is then dug in some pinnacle or high point, and one of the trappers therein ensconsed. The su-

face is then covered over with brush, leaving an apperture for observation. The deer is then carefully laid upon the brush. The rest of the party now retire to some secluded place and "make medicine."

If a hungry eagle sights the dead deer in his soaring rounds he very slowly circles round and round, and if his keen eyes sees no danger he alights and sinks his talons in the flesh at once. A quick red hand is thurst out and the eagle's legs are clasped firmly and another red hand is tugging at the tail feathers until he is plucked of the coveted black tips, when he is released to grow a new set.

"Man's inhumanity to man," sometimes turns the tables upon the eagle trapper. Sharp eyes are watching the soaring of the big birds until an eagle catchers camp is located. It is a war party; and a trapper is trapped. His own locks become a trophy and the brush pit his grave.

The Indians are firm believers in the eagles strength of talons and invulnerable to many leaden balls of death sped after them. Indeed, when many Indians shoot at a flying eagle, they are prepared to juke the return

bullet, they believing it caught by the eagle's talons to be hurled back defiantly on the head of its would be destroyer.

The Aricaree and Gros Ventre Indians in earlier days, sent out small parties in June to locate war eagles nests and rob them of the young eagles, take them to their villages, and tame them for the annual crop of the tail feathers.

When I came to the Painted Woods in 1869, there were several black and bald eagles nests on the top of the tallest of the cottonwoods. Two in particular were occupied the first few years following. One of these, a black eagle had her nest at the mouth of Otter Creek, and a bald eagle had its nest at the famous group of big cottonwoods, that was formerly the place where war parties painted the trees, that kept alive its legendary name. This group surrounded by old oaks and elms, stood near where the lake empties into the Missouri. One noticeable peculiarity in the nesting habits of the eagles, that they avoid building in large groves, but always chose an old tall cottonwood, either in a small group or entirely alone near the bank of the river, with a clear view in every direction, while perched upon their big and showy nest.

Several eagles, both bald and black, were poisoned at the wolf baits or caught at the fox traps that I had set out on both sides of the Missouri, during the winters of 1871-2, so that but one nest was occupied in the spring of 1873, around the Painted Woods, and that one was at the painted tree group.

About the first of June of that year, Richmond and Raney—two hunters, and myself, rigged up and went to this bald eagle's nest to capture the young birds if possible, for the purpose of rearing and taming them.

We found the eagle on her nest, but the distance from the ground was fully one hundred feet, with no branches to assist in climbing the first forty feet. An oak was cut to fall against the big cottonwood, and Raney mounted this as a ladder and by some ropes to assist, reached within a few yards of the nest.

Up to the time of the climber's near approach the eagle had remained quietly on her nest. But she now seemed to get frightened and darted out and commenced soaring toward the clouds. Meanwhile, at Raney's request, I stood watching the eagle while he continued his climbing and had reached and was stand-

ing on a limb, baffled and resting. A mothers fury at the peril of her young seemed now to possess the bird for after a few lowering circles she darted downward with terrible rapidity, evidently aiming to dash herself against Raney's back and would have knocked him from the tree at the probable expense of her own life.

Having my rifle ready at the commencement of her descent, and though with rapid guess work for aim, fired toward her as she fluttered through the tree tops, and an accidental but lucky shot was the result. The ball struck the tip of her wing, throwing her from the accuracy of her descending line, and she crashed through the lower limbs to the earth.

She was then made captive, and Raney failing to reach the nest, as a last resort the giant cottonwood was felled to the earth, with no accumulated trophies save a few dead birds. The eagle got well and escaped after a few days of morose captivity. She was seen to circle around the fallen monarch of this ancient group of cottonwoods, after which she and her kind disappered never again to nest in that section of country.

CHAPTER XVI.

Wolfing and Trapping Around the Upper White Earth Country—Smart Beaver Again—Vic Smith as a Dime Novel Hero.

UPPER White Earth River flows into the Missouri a few miles above the great bend of this mighty watery thoroughfare, and has its source in the neighborhood of the boundary line bordering the British possessions.

The White Earth, so named from its chalky bluffs, is a narrow river with a cramped, deep cut valley as it approaches the bluffs of the Missouri. The water of the stream is comparatively free from alkali, considering the section of country, and is fed by numerous clear water springs. The timber is scarce and in patches mostly in deep, side ravines.

The country around the White Earth was more noted for its hunting than trapping

grounds. Elk and bear were plentiful, also deer and antelope. Buffalo were likewise found there before their extermination.

The Red River half breeds made the stream a frequent camping place. They were good trappers and kept the water game well down.

While having frequently passed up and down the military trail crossing this river, yet I did not commence trapping there until the autumn of 1874. On this occasion three of us fitted out with four ponies and traps at Painted Woods and struck across the divides, signing up Snake Creek, Sully's Lake and Upper Knife River on the route.

The new members of this trapping trip were Raney the eagle trapper, and a young man named Buck, who was afterwards killed by Joseph's Nez Perces. We spent most of our time hunting, wolfing and foxing with varied fortunes.

The spring following, in the company of Vic Smith, I again visited the White Earth. Smith next to Reynolds, was the leading hunter that had appeared on the Upper Missouri. Our business on this trip was to locate a band of elk, and capture the calves.

We found a small band of them near the

Trappers Buttes, but finding no calves, we concluded it was probably too early, therefore went into camp in a timbered ravine keeping the elk herd continually in sight, though remaining ourselves unseen to them.

But shortly after a not entirely unexpected state of affairs ended the novel hunt. A band of White Hat's wandering Santees came along and slaughtered every elk in the band. It was a disappointment in a financial way to us as we had been offered five hundred dollars for a pair of healthy young elks, to be delivered at a Northern Pacific railway station.

After the elk fiasco, Smith saddled up and started for the Yellowstone, while I remained and run out a line of beaver traps between the Buttes and the Missouri. Here again Castor Fiber, exhibited his wit as bought by experience. After catching two or three the first night, they seemed to be thoroughly on their guard. Besides the usual trick of springing the trap with peeled sticks, or turning them bottom side up, they piled stones on them, some weighing several pounds. These beavers, having been educated at the Half Breeds expense, I cheerfully yielded to them

the advantages derived and pulled out for Grinnell's ranch near Strawberry Island on the Missouri.

In the autumn of 1875, I made my last trapping raid to the White Earth country. "Sioux" Jack and Dickens were my escort on this occasion. We signed and trapped the Little Muddy River and other streams around Fort Buford.

We turned our ponies into the Gros Ventre camp at Old Fort Union, giving their care to "Bonypart" their chief. Our intention was to charter or buy a skiff and trap the Muddy Shute, Strawberry Island and other beaver resorts along the Missouri. The chief assured us on leavetaking that the ponies were a present, that they would not be called for. Setting Bull was just acoss on Cherry Creek with eighty lodges, and Long Dog the Trapper Killer was perambulating along the west side of the Missouri with some "bad young men."

Believing that the Gros Ventre had some foundation for his earnest talk, we concluded to notify the woodyard men as we passed along, especially the west siders.

The first woodyard we touched on our passage was Scotts, on the west side some ten

miles below Fort Buford. As the day was waning on our arrival, we concluded to camp there. Besides proprietor Scott, we found Vic Smith the hunter and Deacon Hemmingway the fidler, the latter formerly of the Painted Woods. Smith invited me to look over his hunting grounds, and while doing so I explained the Indian situation.

On the next day after our departure, while the Deacon was busy putting some after dinner licks into his growing wood pile he was startled by a shot; a painted Indian falling from behind a tree in front of him, and a yell from Smith. It was a dime novel episode in its startling actuality.

It appears Smith, who had been resting in the Deacon's cabin, concluded to go to the prairie edge and kill a deer. He followed the old man's path to where he was chopping. He was gliding noiselessly along in his moccasins when his quick eye noticed a red object near a tree. He saw that it was a painted Indian and that he was taking a deliberate aim at the Deacon, and was too absorbed to notice Smith's approach. What then happened has been already described. A war party of eight at the edge of the timber finding their

comrade shot retreated. They were doubtless Long Dog's bushwhacker's, though white men who claimed to know pronounced the dead Indian a Gros Ventre.

Some two weeks later, while at Grinnell's, I noticed the Deacon among the stage passengers. He informed me he had been attacked three different times and shot at by Indians in that interval. But the first attack learned his eyes a wandering habit and the "salvages" were obliged to take him at long range; and hereafter he would put them to more trouble to hunt him up.

CHAPTER XVII.

Lake Mandan—The Last Winter Hunt—An Ice Gorge on the Missouri—Destruction of the Deer.—Lost Indian Boy.

LAKE Mandan, a former bed of the great river Missouri, lies north west of the Painted Woods about twelve miles; being intermediate between that point and Lower or Big Knife River. It is a place of historic interest as being the vicinity of old camping grounds of confederated Indians. It was near this place where the explorers Lewis and Clark, found the lower village of the Mandans, in October 1804.

The shores and neighboring plain is still well marked by the raised circles of earth where savage life had its time of joys and sorrows—where the soft voiced maidens danced and sang their wild lullabies in circles in the shadowy twilight of summer days. Where the ambitious warrior returned from the war

path to show his spoil and vaunt his deeds; or some heart broken mother or wife wailing mournfully from some bluff's pinnacle for he who went forth to hunt, or do battle, and returned no more.

After the remnants of the Mandans and Aricarees moved to the vicinity of Fort Berthold in 1856, the large brush bottoms south of Lake Mandan became a resort for numerous herds of elk and deer, while the broken buttes west were favorite summer pasture grounds of the gazelle like antelope.

Otter, too, though remorselessly hunted by the red men, began to appear on a body of water well suited to them. Here, also, in hiding like the deer he hunted,—passing his last days in the quiet of a hermit's life, hidden among the thick willows,—scrowling and soured—was Partizan, the last heriditary chief of the Wanderers a defunct band of the once numerous Aricarees.

In the centre of Lake Mandan with its growth of sand ridged cottonwood,—a black eagle's nest on the top of the oldest and tallest,—stands out in bold relief the Haunted Island. An Indian mermaid once floated here to beguile and betray. Assuming all forms,

and appearing sometimes as trysting maid and sometimes as gay feathered hunter. Could it be that the young clerk McClelland, when he left the gang plank of a steamer tied up for the night on the Missouri's bank facing this Island, walked out in the darkness to meet the guiles of the watery nymp, decked out as pretty maid: or was seized and dragged through the miry depths to the mysterious subterranian abode of the morose but feathery dressed hunter At any event, after he passed beyond the glare of the boats landing torches on that November night 1879 he passed from human sight forever.

During the winter of 1877-8, I visited this lake for mink and otter, and made profitable catches. These animals had left the lake and were wintering, as their wont, on the small spring branches.

In December 1880, a hunting and trapping party of five of us making two camps, proceeded to try for a final clean up of water game. The winter was severe by spells, but deep snows and melting thaws enabled us to kill several deer and trap some foxes, wolves, catamounts, mink and beaver.

The writing member of the firm, Lawyer

LAKE MANDAN IN SUMMER.

Farley, received word from Periot, the Chicago furriers, that the large snowy owl was in demand, and if caught, carefully skinned and shipped, they being worth from two to five dollars for each bird. The White Owl Mountains east of the Missouri, was visited for this purpose without success. In February the party, less myself, pulled out for Kill Deer Mountains, in the Little Missouri Bad Lands to look for otter sign and kill bear, which were reported plenty there.

I now remained back to close up the trapping and recross the river before the spring break up. I was not altogether alone. About one mile above camp; along the river, were two lodges of Aricarees. One lodge was presided over by Good Heart, an Arapahoe, captured when a child by the Aricarees, adopted and brought up as one of their own. The other lodge had for its master Little Bull, a good hunter, who had for his wife the sister of Bob Tailed Bull, the bravest warrior and most noted hunter among all the Aricarees.

Little Bull was a frequent visitor to my camp, bringing along his wife and an only son, a bright eyed little fellow of seven or eight summers. Some picture books I had

with me claimed the little fellow's attention, and he would hardly enter the cabin before he would ask for the books and pour intently over them during the parents stay.

Finally an early March thaw started the water running over the ice, thus obstructing for a time the ice trail of my visitors.

One night soon after, I was awakened by the terrible sounds on the still air of a mountain lion. The sounds were located on a low piece of ground, and a visit to the river bank told me the lion's trouble. The river was rising rapidly and the animal submerged. The camp was between the river and lake, a dangerous place in a flood. My two ponies were already on the prairie, so tumbled the effects in a bull boat, made out for higher ground.

In a day or two the water receded, but I never returned to the cabin. Early one morning while attending some fox baits I saw a band of seven deer and at one stand killed them all. Hunting up the Indians I made them a present of the meat, reserving myself the hides only. I had killed two and three at a stand quite often; had once killed five at one time but this was my highest hunter's

notch. Unknown to the Indians I saddled up the ponies and moved along the river to the Burnt Woods—seven miles below.

The new camp was in a land slide opposite the Painted Woods bottoms, where were Ranchman Merry's cattle and horse herds.

One morning I awoke, threw off the covering and saw a vast field of ice. It was a gorge caused by the ice of the Yellowstone running under the solid unthawed ice of the Missouri, then four feet thick. It was a prodigous upheavel spreading out for miles on either side of the river's natural bed, bearing down and crushing mighty forests of cottonwoods like reeds in a mill pond.

A cold wave followed, the river kept rising higher and extending its banks. About midnight after gradual raise of forty-eight hours I could hear the dying bellowings, neighs and moans, of the freezing and drowning horses and cattle, intermingled with the crash of trees and craunching of ice floes.

At daylight the deer, now driven from their last perches on the sandhills in the timber, were vainly striving to swim ashore, breaking the newly frozen ice as they slowly struggling along. Numbers had reached the bank,

but others finaly tired out sank down out of sight.

When the channel ice commenced moving, a large floe of it came down with about ten deer hanging on the sides. Now and then the floe would roll round and round, or break each move one after another deer disappeared. The silent supplication for life, and the earnest struggle, was a pitying spectacle.

Nor were the troubles of those safely ashore over. Burnt prairies and bitter cold wind kept them close to the bank. They came around my camp, like pleading lambs. They were safe. I harmed none of them, though had I so willed could have probably killed fifty. The truth was my heart softened at the sight. My hunting days were about to end.

A few day later I returned to Lake Mandan for a cache of traps. While their the Bear, one of the members of Good Heart's lodge came to the place where the traps where buried. He told me he almost alone now. Good Hart was taken to the agency, snow blind. Point my finger to an object like a shaft of stone on a high point of bluffs—a something my eyes had not seen there before. "What is that?" I said. "Oh! that is Little Bull looking for his

LAWYER FARLEY,
The White Owl Trapper.

son," "Looking for his son." I answered. "Yes he is almost crazy now." Bear replied.

Bear then sit down to tell me what had happened. The day after I gave them the seven deer, the ice still firm, rose on the river turtle shaped, giving it a solid appearance between my cabin and the Indian lodges. Bull was out and mother and son were alone.

"I am going to see Pawnee Talker's books," said the boy, and out the door flap he bolted. The mother thinking him jesting paid no attention for some time. Becoming uneasy she followed out and took his trail. His little tracks led along the ice ridge until an open fissure through the ice to the water was reached and there they suddenly ended.

The mother's agonizing screams brought the husband and father. He led his wife away a maniac and in three days she was dead Hanging herself to a lodge pole.

"Do you know what I think," said the Bear gravely to me in concluding, "I think that the Mermaid stole that boy."

CHAPTER XVIII.

At the Painted Woods.

HEADQUARTERS or more properly, in the trappers' vernacular, "rendezvous," during the closing years of my trapping experience, was at the Painted Woods. Here in a heavy cottonwood forest I erected a stockaded dwelling in 1873, but was destroyed by a great ice gorge from the Missouri, the year following. Another more pretentious building was erected on its site. This latter stockade passed the floods and inundations unscathed until 1881, when it followed its predecessor, and by the same route.

A part of each year was put in at the rendezvous, as the game in that neighborhood was as plentiful as elsewhere in that section of country. Deer, elk and antelope were in abundance up to about the year 1876.

Elk, were mostly confined to the timbered bends. Every considerable timber point had a herd of from ten to twenty, and sometimes as many as forty. They remained in a point

until scared, when they were liable to trot off into another section of country altogether.

These elk around the Painted Woods, were for the most part needlessly and wantonly destroyed. Up to the summer of 1874, there resided in a clump of elms, now called Fairman's Homestead, an immense buck elk, with a heavy pair of horns. Unlike his fellows, he refused to be scared away.

Reynolds, Blanchard, Little Dan, Archy and hosts of others had "pumped lead" into the patient beast, but he refused to down. He was named "Bull of the Woods" by some; also "hunters' lead mine." He was believed to lead a charmed life. But the spell was broken. Bull of the Woods was slaughtered. Not by one of these "mighty hunters" but by a green little Irish boy, who fired the first shot of his life, at this woods monarch, and the giant dropped dead from a broken neck.

A short distance above the abode of the Bull of ths Woods, lived another wonder to the professional hunter, and this was the "Deer's Ghost," or sometimes called the Hiddenwood buck, from his appearing occasionally along the banks of Hiddenwood Creek, buck on the high prairies. He was crowned

with a mighty pair of antlers, and wore a hairy suit of never changing iron grey.

Like the Bull of the Woods, he seemed impervious to the leaden showers of the hunter's rifles. One of these nimrods—Garrett Howe, averred the Deer's Ghost circled around him continually on one of his hunts and drew his shots often enough to scare other deer away, thereby keeping him from killing any "real" deer. Unlike the elk, he did not fall from an amateurs rifle, or from any hunter's rifle—white or red, as far as ever known. He disappeared from his haunts during the year of the Custer massacre, and about the same time of that event.

Antelope, during the first few years of my residence at the Woods, were frequently seen around there in large and numerous herds. The introduction of long range repeating rifles into that country was death to antelope and buffalo alike.

The Missouri river was dividing line for two great communities of antelopes. Those of them that wintered in the Bad Lands west of the river, came to the bluffs and banks near that stream for early spring feed, and the

the females to care for there young. They soon fattened by the nutritious buffalo grass, and were the chief early summer food supply of Indians and woodyard men.

Around the Square Buttes, and along the Missouri, opposite the Painted Woods, were a favorite resort in early summer for the antelope. I had noticed as many as twenty seperate flocks or herds at one time feeding as quietly as sheep. The two hunters Reynolds and Diamond made frequent summer camp to kill these animals and sun dry the meat. It was a wasteful way as but little more than a part of the hams could be used.

The antelope on the east side come only to the Missouri, in autumn and winter exactly reversing those on the west side. When the prairies are burned and the snow deep, the poor brutes became starved and poor. In this condition a few winters ago, the east river antelope were destroyed. Starving and weakened antelope saw no mercy in the eyes of starving settlers with long range repeaters and this beautiful animal has passed out of the pale of game laws enacted after their virtual extermination in the Dakotas.

The meat eating magpie, were the most numerous of the bird kind on my first advent in northern Dakota. They remained all winter and shared with the eagles, ravens and wolves and foxes, the pickings, from offals of hunting camps. They are birds of nearly pigeon size, long tailed, variegated with white, black, and blue plumage. They are very intelligent and great chatterers. They often served a hunter instead of a dog; would fly over and ahead of him while hunting, and when deer or elk were located, set up a great noise which the observing hunter well understood. Of course the bird expected the entrails for its services.

But later on when the poisoner and the trapper came, these choice bits of meat the magpie formerly chattered so loquatiously over, were turned into instruments of death for the poor bird. It was not intended for them of course, but being a sharer of the subtle banquet spread for the fox and the wolf, he unwittingly died for their sake.

About the year 1879, every solitary magpie left that section of country. They seemed to to have gone to stay for none have been back since their hegira.

After the high water had subsided following the break-up of 1882, the water in the low point around the stockade remained damed up and as a consequence, I made open camp on a dry knoll among the hard wood. The water between the camp and residence in consequence of the cold became a mass of ice. While preparing breakfast one morning I heard sounds in the brush above camp about one hundred yards away. The sounds bore on my ears at the time, as that of a combat between two badgers. Breakfast over the sounds had ceased, though I took up the rifle to reconnoiter. On the ice lay an immense buck deer just killed, apparently, with his lams partly eaten. Around and about was the marks of a terrible struggle on the ice, and the huge tracks of two mountain lions. They had run the deer on the ice, where they mastered him, though he made a desperately brave fight for his life. The lions satisfied, fled in dense brush as I came in sight.

While trapping along Painted Woods Creek, in 1876, I discovered two immense snapping turtles near the old military crossing, and shot them. The weight of each

turtle was over sixty pounds. I hauled them to Rhude's Turtle Valley Ranch where the genial proprietor gave the meat a two days boiling without any perceptible effect. The Indians considered their killing almost a sacrilege. They claimed that these same two turtles were living and known to their grandfathers. They believed their destruction boded ill to future people living along the banks of these two turtle's former haunts.

The fall of 1889, another shot from my rifle, if not so far reaching in its effects, was at least an odd one. This happened on Lookout Point, back on the bluffs from my residence. A light snow had fallen, and while out hunting spied a fox and shot it. On going to it a mutilated $20 bill dropped from its mouth. I took its back trail, and in about half of a mile found the place where the fox had picked it up. The smell of grease on the bill had attracted the fox's appetite. A shuffling of the snow turned up nearly $100 in bills. It had been lost by a wagon master of the Fort Berthold Agency, two months previous.

From the building of the first stockade at the Rendezvous, the place became a ... ing

LONG SOLDIER, THE TRAPPER SCARER.
War chief of the hostile Sioux during the expeditions of Generals Sibley and Sully into the Sioux country, in 1863-4.

for Indians of different tribes, while passing along the river.

During the closing days of the hereditary war between the Sioux and the Indians of Fort Berthold, the war parties of the latter frequently stopped there to rest and dry their bull boats.

When the war was ended, both parties made it their passing camping ground.—Among the occasional campers was Long Soldier the giant chief of the lower Unepapa Sioux. He was a prominent war chief during the expeditions of General Sully in 1863–4. He said that in the days of his power, he fought to kill soldiers only. With citizens, trappers and woodchoppers, he was satisfied when he gave them a good scare occasionally. He claimed to have frequently interfered to save their lives from the vengeance of his followers.

One dark night in October, 1879, while alone at the Rendezvous, I was disturbed from late reading by the violent barking of the watch dog; but on going out to investigate found nothing. After a short time the barking was resumed again, more violent than

ever. I took up the gun, and after making a circle around the stockade, went to the river bank but nothing could be seen. At this I returned and entered the house, when some one with head muffled in a blanket was setting before the lighted fireplace, and deigned not to notice my approach.

I knew that habit was Indian, though I quietly asked in English who was there. No answer. I then asked the same in Sioux, still no answer. Then in Aricaree. At this the figure arose, dropped the blanket mask, and revealed an Indian woman in tears. "Don't you know me?" she sobbed, "I am Mrs.——." I knew her. I remembered her, as but yesterday the handsome Indian wife of a rich white trader; a position where every her want anticipated, every whim gratified. A position, too, that brought envy that ripened on the reckoning.

Her husband was ambitious and proud. He was brave as a lion in battle, but in facing the social world and its imperious law, a coward. When that section was Indian land and under Indian dominion, his Indian wife who, as a queen among her tribe, he delighted to do her honor. But now with his own race dom-

inant and they the red race dispised. A frivolous excuse he cast the mother of his children from him, and married one of his own race that his business prospects might not be lessoned or his social standing impaired.

Poor Indian what of her. She had returned to her people to be redieuled misfortune more often brings that, than simpathy from elegant mansion or Indian lodge.

This Indian woman had just been trying to see her children, but failed. On her gloomy return she had been beset by drunken men: had fled in deep timber and lay hiding without eating for two days.

She remained at my place until I could communicate with her friends, when she was taken to the agency.

If ever I was thrown in the presecnce of a broken heart, it was during the few days stay of this Indian woman at the stockade. Her pleadings that she might see her children once again for they had been taken long ago to a distant State ring yet in my ears in endless chime.

Though she was at this time comparatively young, healthy and strong, yet but a few months passed when Sharp Horn, the medi-

cine man or chief priest of the Aricarees, came to me to say the woman was dead. "She cried herself," he said "into her grave."

In some of these closing pages I shown how the deer, elk, and antelop destroyed in one section. Throughout t west, it was very much the same u Great Plains are no longer reckoned one of the wild game preserves in the Wild buffalo have many years since, out of the wild game lists forever.

In the Dakotas, the poisoning of the little fox-like swift, gave the gophers a chance to multiply by the million, and thousands of acres of grain are annually destroyed. To save their crops poisoned seeds are sown broadcast, and birds of all kinds must suffer.

Among the birds thus disappearing is the little yellow breasted prairie lark, prized for its song of four notes, which it sings so sweetly every summer morning. It will be sadly missed by the lonely prairie denizens in that half desert land.

THE END.

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